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Parents' and Teachers' Perceptions of Parental Involvement

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2019

Abstract

Parents' and Teachers' Perceptions of Parental Involvement

by

Sebrina Patton

MA, Freed Hardman University, 2003

BA, Lane College, 2000

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

August 2019

Abstract

Lack of parental involvement is an issue in the educational system because parents and

teachers do not understand each other's views. Research has shown that when parents and

teachers provide students with support, student achievement increases. The problem of

teachers' and parents' lack of common understanding of parental involvement was

addressed in this study. Epstein's model of parental involvement and the theory of

planned behavior served as the theoretical framework of this qualitative, exploratory,

phenomenological study to explore the perceptions of 5 teachers and 10 parents who

were purposefully sampled. The research questions were focused on parents' and

teachers' perceptions on parental involvement in supporting students' achievement. Data

were analyzed using of Moustakas's steps for phenomenological model. Trustworthiness

was ensured through peer review, member checking, and descriptive research notes.

Findings from the data collected from face-to-face interviews identified 3 themes:

parenting and learning at home, volunteering and decision making, and communicating

and collaborating with the community. The 3 themes overlapped with components of

Epstein's model of parental involvement and were evident in the participants' answers to

the interview questions. The resulting project was a white paper designed to educate the

community about problems with parental involvement, provide solutions to the issue, and

help parents and teachers to work collaboratively to improve student achievement. The

project contributes to social change through formative feedback for the major

stakeholders regarding ways to promote efficient and effective practices for both parents

and teachers to promote student learning.

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Dedication

Humbly, I would like to thank the God that I serve for giving me the strength to work on this doctoral study. I consistently asked Him to guide me when I wanted to give up because at times, I felt overwhelmed by the process. I also would like to thank my sister for her valuable time, input, and motivational conversations that led me to finish this doctoral experience.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my chair, Dr. Dan Cernusca, for working with me. He taught me a lot about conducting research, synthesizing information, using my critical-thinking skills, and applying the APA manual techniques to the study. His feedback helped me tremendously throughout this doctoral process.

I also would like to recognize my sister, Nekia Patton, who has supported me during all of my educational endeavors, particularly during this doctoral journey. She has always motivated me to be prompt, positive, and persistent in completing tasks. We work so well together because our hearts beat to the same drum of helping students to become better learners.

To conclude, I would like to acknowledge two friends, Vidale Cothran Sr. and Thomas J. Robinson, for ensuring that I was able to work in a quiet area and for providing the resources that I needed to complete the study. I am truly thankful for their support. Lastly, I would like to thank my son, Vidale Cothran Jr., along with my students, for being my little cheerleaders when I needed the same encouragement and inspiration that I give them as they strive to meet their own personal and academic goals.

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

Parents are students' initial source of support to encourage and enhance the learning process (Radzi, Razak, & Sukor, 2010). Teachers are equally important because as educators, their goal is to help students to build valuable knowledge and be successful academically. However, research has shown that the instructional techniques used in some school districts (i.e., relying only on teachers) have not been suitable and that students learn more when their parents are involved in the education process (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). The issue of different perceptions of parental involvement can be resolved at the school level if parents and teachers work together to support student achievement.

The perceptions of parents and teachers need to be understood by the other group so that they can work together to support student learning. For example, parents and teachers can establish discussion groups to become aware of and understand their perceptions of parental involvement. Communication between parents and teachers is needed to move the students in the right direction and promote quality education (Larocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011). Schools can make policies to create more opportunities for the two groups to communicate effectively and work together to improve students' academic achievement.

Definition of the Problem

Educators at MER Elementary, a pseudonym for the K-5, Title 1 school in Tennessee that was the focus of this study, teach 5 days a week. MER Elementary is

located in one of the largest school districts in a region of the state. Approximately 80% of the schools in this metropolitan school district are Title 1 schools, which is the largest federally funded educational program in the country (Tennessee Department of Education, 2013). The Title 1 program, authorized by the U.S. Congress, provides supplemental funds to assist schools with the highest student concentrations of poverty to meet educational goals (Tennessee Department of Education, 2013). For example, in one eastern city of Tennessee, "Many of the eastern city's most difficult problems are rooted in the growing prevalence of single-parent households in the poverty-stricken inner city" ("Fewer Two-Parent Homes in Memphis," p. 1). With a similar issue, MER Elementary has problems meeting school improvement measures because single parents are the sole providers of their families and cannot support their children's learning adequately.

Each school day at MER Elementary lasts 6 to 7 hours. The school's primary role is to help the students to identify the concepts and build the skills required by the state of Tennessee. Teachers can inquire about the help of parents to support student achievement. According to Hatton (2012), "Tennessee Gov. Haslam, who has implemented tougher education policies since taking office in 2010, says parental involvement is a 'key issue' " (p. 1). This statement suggested that collaboration between parents and teachers will help students to learn new content. As indicated by D. Harris (2013), parents can use a variety of communication methods, such as phone calls, e-mails, text messages, and/or letters, to get to know their children's teachers. Parents are encouraged to work with schools to educate their children (D. Harris, 2013). Educational

researchers have found the lack of parental involvement to be associated with low student achievement (Colombo, 2006).

Another important issue has been relevant to the perceptions of parents and teachers regarding the ways that parental involvement can support student's academic achievement. Bartel (2010) asserted that the educators of Title 1 students need to learn how to support parents interested in helping their children to improve academically. If the perceptions of parents and teachers about parental involvement are not recognized and discussed, then neither group will know how to work collaboratively with the other to support student's academic achievement. Schools can offer professional development to inform parents of ways to be more effective in helping their children at home with academic learning tasks (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Bridgeland, 2010; Sad, 2012; Wiseman, 2009). A major benefit of parent-teacher collaboration is the development of partnerships between students' families and their schools (Bryan & Henry, 2012; T. Johnson, 2009).

Parental involvement means that parents are involved in their children's learning from the first to the last day of the school year (D. Harris, 2013). If the two parties discuss each other's perceptions about parental involvement, then solutions to any misunderstandings or problems that might arise are more likely to occur. Understanding the perceptions of parents and teachers about parental involvement might help school district that was the focus of this study to find ways to improve student learning. The educators at MER Elementary engage the learners and encourage them to work hard in the school setting, but parents also can participate in their children's learning. According to Hatton (2012), parents need to spend more educational time with their children.

Parental involvement refers to parents helping teachers to educate their children (Larocque et al., 2011). Uludag (2008) defined parental involvement as "parent and teacher collaboration on children's learning" (p. 809). One result of parental involvement is the development of a strong and collaborative relationship between parents and teachers that will help students to achieve success in their learning activities. For example, role delineation can help to define parents' and teachers' values of education and achievement, as well establish a good relationship (Larocque et al., 2011). Positive communication practices between parents and teachers will help students academically (D. Harris, 2013). The gap in teachers' and parents' common understanding of parental involvement was the focus of this study. By conducting this study, I addressed issues relevant to the ways that teachers and parents experience parental involvement and its role in supporting student achievement.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

The perceptions of teachers and parents about parental involvement are important in supporting students' learning. MER Elementary's school district has a family engagement policy that supports parental involvement. According to the school district, this policy highlights the engagement plan to have schools work with parents to promote student achievement by using standards considered appropriate as required in Tennessee. The family engagement policy spotlights ways to get parents, school staff, and community stakeholders to work collaboratively to improve students' education consistently (MER District, 2013).

In an effort to monitor and support parental involvement, legislators prepared two bills for enactment (L. Johnson, 2012). The first bill (i.e., Tennessee House Bill 2994, 2013) proposed to develop parental contracts, and the second bill (i.e., Senate Bill 2893, 2013) proposed to create parent report cards. This first bill passed and was signed by Governor Bill Haslam in April of 2013. The bill initiated a 4-year pilot program to increase parental involvement, and the office of research and education will monitor this program to determine if it will be a success. The second bill passed on May 29, 2012. The chief expected outcome was that by viewing the report card, parents would know the need for home support. The bills highlighted the responsibility of parents and teachers in Tennessee for students' academic success (L. Johnson, 2012).

MER Elementary's school district supported Bill 2994, but not Bill 2893. Legislators in Tennessee wanted teachers to monitor the level of parental involvement on a section of the report card as excellent, satisfactory, needs improvement, or unsatisfactory (L. Johnson, 2012). The main value of Bill 2994 was to provide tools that would improve parental involvement as well as students' academic performance.

MER Elementary's district has implemented several outreach programs for parents and community members in an effort to foster student achievement because parental involvement has been at a low level. In a leadership meeting at MER Elementary, the principal explained this low level of parental involvement and asked grade-level teams to help to develop strategies to get parents to attend school functions. During a recent family engagement meeting in the school district, the family engagement director also discussed the low level of parental involvement in the district. At the

meeting, she explained that MER Elementary's district had created a parent university to assist parents to become more involved in their children's learning. According to the department of student support, data from the school district holding MER illustrated the need for volunteers to assist students in specific academic areas. The district's division of parent and community engagement's goal was to ensure that students were receiving educational support from the school, parents, and community members. Community Partnerships and Volunteer Training are the highlighted outreach programs, part of the Family Engagement Plan, to help the district increase parental involvement and community support. The outreach programs were developed to help students to succeed academically with the support of their parents and the community. Because MER Elementary's school district holds approximately 80% Title 1 schools in high-poverty areas, the outreach programs serve as a guide for parents to help their children with educational activities, such as completing class assignments and preparing them in an effort to raise their low scores on state tests.

According to Tekin (2011), parental involvement can help students to gain academic success. Parents have to communicate with their children to ensure that they are completing their assignments accurately (Christianakis, 2011). Teachers can help parents by offering workshops and training sessions on effective strategies to promote student learning. Schools that have developed partnerships with parents have been effective because of the workshops offered to assist those parents (Caudle, Bayan, Harrington, & Barnes, 2012).

At MER Elementary, data from the teachers' sign-in sheets and contact logs showed that only a few parents were attending school functions, such as open houses, literacy nights, parent-teacher conferences, testing preparations, GED trainings, and Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings. The school documented that attendance at these events was below 50%, except for the open house, which reached almost 65%. Historically, parental involvement has been a problem because of the timing of activities organized by schools (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Most of the activities at MER Elementary in particular are held in the evenings. Some parents work during this time, so school administrators might try to be more flexible when scheduling some of these activities. Educators at MER Elementary are required to call the parents and distribute flyers to encourage them to attend activities to support the student. Although the educators are communicating well with parents, administration should consider scheduling activities at different times to meet parents' availability.

MER Elementary is located in a high-poverty area, so parents may have valid reasons from their minimal attendance at school functions. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) contended that some parents are raising their children alone and that many parents may be working at two jobs. To be specific, some minority parents have to work extended hours to take care of their children, limiting their time for parental involvement (Radu, 2011). Completion of this study did not and will not change the poverty situation, but the results might improve the perceptions of parents and teachers toward parental involvement and the ways that it might help to increase students' academic achievement.

MER Elementary, a Title I school, has not shown improvement on the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program test. The test is given to students in Grades 3 to 5 and covers mathematics, reading/language arts, science, and social studies (Tennessee Department of Education, 2013). The report card data for MER Elementary in 2011 showed that 44% of students had a D grade in math, 38% had an F in reading/language arts, 32% had an F in science, and 36% had an F in social studies (Tennessee Department of Education, 2013). The report card data for MER Elementary in 2012 showed that 42% of students had a D in math, 39% had an F in reading/language arts, 33% had an F in science, and 37% had an F in social studies (Tennessee Department of Education, 2013). The school's 2013 results resembled the first 2 years: documented: 43% had a D in math, 38% had an F in reading/language arts, 34% had an F in science, and 37% had an F in social studies (Tennessee Department of Education, 2013). According to Van Voorhis (2011), communication between school personnel and parents is needed to increase students' academic achievement. If the parents and school officials of MER Elementary were to spend more time asking the students questions about their academic plans and progress, then a positive change in student performance may occur.

To address the issue of low student achievement, billions of dollars in federal, state, and local support went to MER Elementary's district to assist low-income families and to fight poverty (U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2011). The district saw only 61% of students pass in reading and only 57% passing in math on the Tennessee School Report Card in 2012. The government has supported MER Elementary with funds, so

school officials and parents should work on a common goal to help students to improve their academic performance in content areas.

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

In this section, I discuss four major components: academic achievement, communication, parent and community, and factors relevant to home and school. Each component will help to identify parents' and teachers' perceptions of parental involvement. Most noteworthy, parents' support of parental involvement has resulted in documentation of the active roles of families in students' education (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Parental involvement and academic achievement. Several researchers have linked parental involvement and students' academic achievement (Aziz, Hassan, & Atta, 2011; Coleman & McNeese, 2009; D. George & Mensah, 2010; Grace, Jethro, & Aina, 2012; Graves, 2010; Regner, Loose, & Dumas, 2009). Moreover, an increasing body of research has identified the connection between parental involvement and student achievement in several areas: parents' level of education, socioeconomic status, and income (Hilgendorf, 2012; Sad & Gurbuzturk, 2013; Vincent & Neis, 2010; Wamala, Kizitok, & Jjemba, 2013). According to Strange (2011), students should learn as much as possible at school and should ask for parental assistance at home to improve their academic achievement. Research in recent years also has shown that minority students improve academically when the schools communicate with students and parents to help them to identify strategies that they can use at home to help the children (Gillanders, McKinney, & Ritchie, 2012; Souto-Manning, 2010; Witte & Sheridan, 2011).

The research literature has indicated that minority parents' busy schedules can hinder students' academic performance (Lyonette & Clark, 2009; Sauve, 2009; Vincent & Neis, 2010). D. George and Mensah (2010) and Jeynes (2005) found that negative parental involvement, such as contacting the school too often, wanting to change homework directions, and wanting to choose textbooks, had an impact on students' academic achievement.

Parental involvement and communication. Communication in connection with parental involvement that supports student learning has been highly researched. Some researchers have found that sending invitations to parents to inform them about school events has been effective in encouraging parental involvement (Abel, 2012; Goldkind & Farmer, 2013; Pakter & Chen, 2013). Other researchers have found that when parents assisted students, the students were more prepared to learn in the school setting (Bridgeland, 2010; Jeynes, 2011a). The effective use of technology, such as automatic phone calls, e-mails, parent portals, texting, or websites, also increased parental involvement (Kosaretskii & Cherrnyshova, 2013; Olmstead, 2013; Pakter & Chen, 2013). Understanding parents' and teachers' perceptions is important, and the two groups should learn different ways to communicate to improve student achievement.

Parental involvement and the community. The collaboration between parents and the community is another factor in parental involvement practices. For example, Carolan-Silva (2011) and Kitching, Roos, and Ferreira (2011) found a positive association between parental involvement and social interactions among learners, educators, and parents in school communities. A wealth of research has indicated that

school, family, and community partnerships can help to improve the levels of parental involvement (Bryan & Henry, 2012; Goodkind, LaNoue, Lee, Freeland, & Freund, 2012; Griffin & Steen, 2010; Rule & Kyle, 2009). According to Rule and Kyle (2009) as well as Stetson, Stetson, Sinclair, and Nix (2012), home visits helped teachers appreciate both parents' and students' values and beliefs to assist with student learning. Finally, T. Johnson (2009) and Wiseman (2009) reported on the ways that understanding the expectations of parents and schools toward student learning stimulated the community to promote parental involvement.

Parental involvement and factors relevant to home and school. Some researchers have discussed the importance of factors relevant to home and school concerning parental involvement. For example, researchers have identified a low level of parental education as influencing parental involvement negatively (Baeck, 2010; Bartel, 2010; Muir, 2012; Radu, 2011; Vellymalay, 2012). In addition, researchers have studied the ways that factors such as home communication and decision making can impact the extent of parental involvement (Baeck, 2010; Bartel, 2010; Dor & Rucker-Naidu, 2012; Hindin, 2010; McKenna & Millen, 2013). Hindin (2010) found that communication between teachers and parents increased parental involvement. Explaining how parents communicate through voice, presence, and engagement has been an important component of parental involvement (McKenna & Millen, 2013). In like manner, Bartel (2010) noted that parental involvement increased as parents and teachers collaborated in making decisions to support students' educational process. Understanding the factors relevant to

home and school can assist parents and the school in their efforts to help students to improve academically.

Poverty is another factor relevant to home and school that can have a negative impact on parental involvement practices. Parents who live in poverty might have problems assisting their children because of busy work schedules (Griffin & Galassi, 2010); low family income and limited education (Loughrey & Woods, 2010); and lack of student resources (Payne, 2005). These factors can play a major role in children's education, so parents and educators must collaborate to improve students' learning. Research has indicated that parents (Bartel, 2010; Gould, 2011; Muir, 2012); school officials (G. George, McGahan, & Prabhu, 2012; Payne, 2005; Van Voorhis, 2011); and the community (Griffin & Galassi, 2010; Mendez, Carpenter, LaForett, & Cohen, 2009) can help to strengthen students' learning.

Payne (2005) explained how parents, teachers, and the community could work together as support systems to improve student performance and behavior:

Coping strategies, options during problem-solving, information and know-how, temporary relief from emotional, mental, financial, and/or time constraints, connections to other people and resources, positive self-talk, and procedural self-talk are the seven systems of support categories. (p. 52)

Each category in the statement from Payne (2005) focused on a different strategy to improve student learning.

As already mentioned, poverty is associated with less parental involvement (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Payne, 2005). Students who attend Title 1 schools mostly live in

areas of poverty (Payne, 2005). Hayes (2011) conducted a quantitative study and used questionnaires with a sample of two groups of African American parents to obtain their perceptions of home and school involvement in an urban community. Results indicated that interventions that targeted parental needs helped to improve parental involvement in the schools, regardless of the parents' demographic factors (Hayes, 2011). Schools may want to work more closely with students and parents living in areas of poverty to assist with student learning.

Hashmi and Akhter (2013) found that despite high levels of parental involvement, regardless of school type, private school achievement scores were better. Based on a sample of 600 parents and 600 students, the researchers used surveys adapted from Parental Involvement Questionnaires. Moreover, Payne (2005) indicated that characteristics of poverty helped educators to cope with parents and students living in poor environments. Barone (2011) and Jeynes (2011b) found that minority parents became more involved with the schools when they felt welcomed by and appreciated by school staff. Payne indicated that individuals leave poverty for several reasons: (a) to accomplish a dream or career; (b) to have a new start and accept encouragement from a peer to do more than what is expected; or (c) to gain mastery in an area that leads to better opportunities.

Definitions of Terms

Academic achievement: A form of student performance (Wamala et al., 2013).

Communication: A two-way system of dialogue between or among individuals (Griffin & Steen, 2010).

Parental involvement: Parent and teacher collaboration to promote student learning (Uludag, 2008).

Perceptions: Insights or thoughts about topics (Stetson et al., 2012).

Theory of planned behavior (TPB): According to Perry and Langley (2013), "The theory of planned behavior proposes that human behavior is determined by intention and that there are three determinants of intention: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control" (p. 1).

Significance of the Study

Lack of parental involvement remains a major issue in local and national educational systems, thus supporting the need for research on parents' and teachers' experiences of parental involvement. Although teachers and administrators can incorporate more strategies into the school setting to promote parental involvement (Simons et al., 2002; Van Voorhis, 2011), parents who work at home with their children also will see academic improvements. For example, parents' and teachers' perceptions of parental involvement can be used to develop strategies to support improvements in the reading, language arts, and/or math skills of students. School interventions and improvement plans to increase students' learning might be more effective if parental involvement were used as one strategy to promote student achievement. For students to

assimilate new concepts and build skills, having an increased level of school-parent partnerships could help to improve student learning (Bryan & Henry, 2012; Rule & Kyle, 2009).

Previous research has presented several parents' point of views about parental involvement. Clark (1984) reported that parents should be involved in their children's learning experiences at home and school for two reasons: Family habits and relationships affect children's academic success, and the characteristics of family life can help children to become more successful. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) stated that the parents in their study felt that they did not have to be involved in their children's academic activities because the schools did not stress the importance of the meetings or events. Lawson (2003) found that most parents were not aware of their required role in assisting their children with school activities; parents did not know the school's expectations regarding level of parental involvement. On the other hand, Radzi et al. (2010) found that the most favored types of parental involvement techniques were parenting and communication. McKenna and Millen (2013) asserted that parents wanted teachers to learn more about their children on a personal level, not just from the academic perspective.

The lack of research using models of parental involvement to identify teachers' perceptions of parental involvement also has been signaled by the research literature (Epstein et al., 2009). The current study was an attempt to close this gap in the research on parents' and teachers' views of parental involvement using validated parental involvement models proposed by the literature. Parents and teachers share the

responsibility to guide and direct students toward academic success. Students, parents, and teachers must work together to comprehend and benefit from the teaching and learning processes. When parents help their children at home with learning tasks, they facilitate the creation of a community partnership (Larocque et al., 2011).

Results of this study, which focused on the perceptions of parents and teachers, will assist individuals outside the community, such as stakeholders who want to contribute to students' academic achievement. For example, businesses such as restaurant chains, factories, and professional companies can support students' educational efforts. Stakeholder participation helps to provide schools with resources and information that can support parental involvement (Hourani, Stringer, & Baker, 2012). In this study, I focused on parental involvement. The results could be used to benefit students, parents, administrators, teachers, school district leaders, and other stakeholders from the community who are interested in the educational growth and performance of students.

Research Questions

The focus of the study was to analyze the perceptions of parents and teachers regarding parental involvement at MER Elementary. Parents and teachers can work together as a team to assist students with their educational endeavors. The goal of this research was to evaluate the perceptions of parents and teachers of parental involvement in my school district by using the Epstein model (Epstein et al., 2009) and the TPB (Bracke & Corts, 2012) to improve student performance at school and in the home environment. Three research questions (RQs) guided this study:

RQ1: How do parents describe their own lived experiences to support their children's achievement?

RQ2: How do teachers describe their experiences with parents who are involved or not involved in supporting student achievement?

RQ3: What are similarities and differences in parents' and teachers' lived experiences of parental involvement to assist with improving student achievement?

Review of the Literature

This section presents a review of the literature supporting the perceptions of parents and teachers of parental involvement to support students' academic achievement. Epstein's model (Epstein et al., 2009; Van Voorhis, 2009) and the TPB (Lee, Cerreto, & Lee, 2010) were the conceptual frameworks that guided this study. Included in this section is a synthesis of the literature review using the following themes that emerged from the literature: academic achievement, communication strategies, parents and community, and factors relevant to home and school. ProQuest, ERIC, Thoreau, Google Scholar, and Educational Reports were the databases used to conduct the search for literature. These databases were considered because most peer-reviewed articles had to be published within a 5-year period. The search terms that I used to achieve saturation were *parental involvement*, *teacher involvement*, *student performance*, *school and parent communication*, *teacher communication*, *school community*, *community partnerships*, *teacher perception*, *parent perception*, and *barriers of parental involvement*. I used several other terms, namely, *elementary education*, *parents' views*, *teachers' views*, and

school interventions to add more validity to the study by providing explanations and

clarifications about the different aspects of parental involvement for parents and teachers.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Analyzing the perceptions of parents and teachers regarding parental involvement

will help to support students' academic achievement. Researchers (e.g., Peterson et al.,

2011; Radzi et al., 2010) have generated valid information about parental involvement

that can help parents and teachers to improve students' learning. The conceptual

framework that guided this study was Epstein's model (Epstein et al., 2009; Van Voorhis,

2009). This model holds six types of family involvement practices: positive home

conditions, communication, involvement at school, home learning activities, and shared

decision making within the school and within community partnerships (Epstein &

Dauber, 1991; Epstein et al., 2009). Bower and Griffin (2011) indicated that Epstein's

model has been used often in parental involvement studies with parents as the

participants. The two researchers used Epstein's model in a case study at a high-minority,

high-poverty elementary school and found the need to create strategies to involve parents

that would help the school's population.

Several other researchers also have used Epstein's model. For example, Radzi et

al. (2010) adapted the model in the form of a questionnaire. Their results indicated that of

the six behaviors in the model, teachers favored only two as effective parental

involvement practices: parenting and communication. In addition, other researchers have

identified levels of support in Epstein's model to help to improve student performance

(Barnard, 2004; Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman, 2007; Lopez & Donovan, 2009).

Along with Epstein's model (Epstein et al., 2009) was the TPB, the second part of the theoretical framework (see Bracke & Corts, 2012). Attitudes and beliefs, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control are the components emphasized in the TPB (Bracke & Corts, 2012). According to Bracke and Corts (2012), these components identify different aspects of the parental role: (a) attitudes and beliefs (i.e., parents' perspectives of how students should be educated); (b) subjective norms (i.e., parents' cultural background influence parental involvement); and (c) perceived behavioral control (parents may be limited by resources, transportation, and flexible work schedules). Parental knowledge of their role in their children's education and the importance of parental involvement influenced the components listed in the TPB. Bracke and Corts used the TPB to understand the importance of parental involvement in their children's schooling and reported that all parents wanted to be a part of that learning process.

Perry and Langley (2013) used the TPB to examine factors associated with parental involvement. They concluded that the TPB was a valid theory that helped to explain the practices of parental involvement. Lee et al. (2010) employed the TPB to understand teachers' decisions to use computers to develop lessons and deliver instruction. They found that subjective norms, attitudes and beliefs, and perceived behavioral control were components of the teachers' intentions. Lee et al. ranked attitudes and beliefs as having more influence than the other two components. Application of the TPB helped to enrich this research of parents' views of parental involvement by giving a more detailed understanding of their perceptions. Epstein's model and the TPB also

helped to guide the interview questions to identify the factors related to parental

involvement that could be used to help other stakeholders, such as school leaders,

parents, and the community.

Synthesis of Literature Review

Four themes emerged from the review of the literature for this study: (a) academic

achievement, (b) communication strategies, (c) parent and community, and (d) factors

relevant to home and school. Each theme is discussed in the following text.

Academic achievement. Several researchers have found that students from

minority backgrounds can improve their academic performance when schools and parents

work together (Caudle et al., 2012; Gillanders et al., 2012; Souto-Manning, 2010).

Academic achievement refers to students' ability to learn new skills and concepts

(Mangore & Adsul, 2015). The need to increase knowledge about the perceptions of

teachers and parents toward parental involvement to support student learning, regardless

of parents' economic status, is essential (Caudle et al., 2012; Hilgendorf, 2012). Parents

can assist their children at home with activities to support education. For example, some

researchers have indicated that helping students with homework is a form of parental

involvement that supports academic achievement (Ghazi, Ali, Shahzad, Khan, &

Hukamdad, 2010; Gonida & Cortina, 2014; Xu, Benson, Mudrey-Camino, & Steiner,

2009). According to Christianakis (2011), educators should not only expect parents to

help their children with student learning, but also ask parents if they need assistance with

their children's activities. In fact, some researchers have found that parents, educators,

and school administrators have collaborated effectively to ensure students' success

(Christianakis, 2011; Hilgendorf, 2012; Radu, 2011; Young, Austin, & Growe, 2013). D. George and Mensah (2010) conducted a descriptive study with a target population of 180 students, 180 parents, and 130 teachers. They used semistructured questionnaires to collect data from 88 students and 32 teachers. In addition, 30 more teachers and parents were interviewed to obtain information about the ways that they helped with homework. They found that parental involvement increased when schools made the effort to improve it.

On the other hand, several researchers have discussed the potential negative relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement (Burcu & Sungur, 2009; McNeal, 2012). For example, D. George and Mensah (2010) also found that parental involvement hindered student achievement when parents did not pay attention to the teachers' directions or techniques. In addition, some parents did not have the educational background to assist their children with educational activities (McNeal, 2012).

In the extant academic literature, I also found a discussion of the barriers to parental involvement to assist with student learning (Good, Masewicz, & Vogel, 2010; Graves, 2010; Horby & Lafaele, 2011; Hotz & Pantano, 2015). For example, Horby and Lafaele (2011) found in their exploratory study that barriers to parental involvement could be grouped into Epstein's framework of overlapping spheres comprising family, school, and community. The categories used in their study were individual parent and family factors, parent-teacher factors, child factors, and societal factors. In addition, Hornby and Lafaele found that parental involvement did have several barriers, so

educators and people who wanted to learn more about parental involvement needed to look far past the factors. They suggested that explaining the barriers of parental involvement would help individuals who wanted to understand how to help to support the education of children.

Good et al. (2010) focused on the perceptions of teachers and parents about the barriers to students' academic achievement. Their qualitative study involved having four teachers and eight parent participants in 90-minute, semistructured focus groups and audiotaped interviews. Results identified barriers caused by communication gaps, cultural clashes, and ineffective instructional strategies. Their major recommendation was to increase parental involvement.

A wealth of quantitative research has indicated that parental involvement has an effect on students' academic achievement (Aziz et al., 2011; Radzi et al., 2010; Regner et al., 2009; Sad, 2012; Wei et al., 2016). Altschul (2011) and Sad and Gurbuzturk (2013) found that parents who used financial resources to support student learning improved students' achievement. Altschul explored six parental involvement forms of education to understand which form had the best relationship with youths' educational outcomes using a sample of 1,609 minority youths. The students completed four standardized tests in reading, math, science, and history, and the parents completed a questionnaire (Altschul, 2011). Results showed that at home, active parental involvement was highly effective, whereas parental involvement in school functions did not have any influence on students' academic achievement (Altschul, 2011). Altschul also found that when parents invested

in their children's education with enrichment activities and learning resources, the students improved academically.

Using a quantitative study, Wamala et al. (2013) investigated the link between the academic achievement of Grade 6 students from selected schools to understand and the parents' levels of education. Predesigned questionnaires, students' test data, and results tracking forms were used to gather the data (Wamala et al., 2013). Results of their study indicated that students born to educated parents usually did better academically than students with less educated parents.

Wei et al. (2016) conducted a quantitative study to investigate the relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement with two groups of children: being one child in the family or having siblings in the family. Their sample comprised 397 one-only children, 228 children with siblings, 216 fathers, and 409 mothers. They had the parents complete a 29-item parental involvement questionnaire and the children complete the Raven's Standard Progressive Matrices to test their intelligence levels. Children's intelligence was used as a control variable because intelligence is associated with academic achievement (Wei et al., 2016). Results revealed that the one-only children scored highly above children with siblings on academic achievement activities and that parents were more involved with the children's learning process. In addition, results showed a difference in intelligence levels between the two groups of students (Wei et al., 2016).

Kordi and Baharudin (2010) found that authoritative parenting style had a positive effect on students' academic success. They used a parental authoritative questionnaire to

monitor the three major parental styles: permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative. They found that the authoritative style of parenting had a high rate of consistency with students' achievement. Kordi and Baharudin reported that parents needed to make sure that their attitudes and styles were consistent with those of their children's because the two played a vital role in the teaching and learning processes.

Recent studies have also reported positive relationships between parental involvement and academic achievement (Alonso, Diaz, Woitschach, Alvarez, & Cuesta, 2017; Gordon & Cui, 2014; S. Kim & Hill, 2015; Wilder, 2014). To emphasize empirical evidence, Wilder (2014) focused on nine meta-analysis studies exploring the impact of parental involvement on students' academic performance. Using a qualitative approach, Wilder found a positive relationship between parental involvement and students' academic performance; however, an indication of weakness occurred when parental involvement was viewed only as an element of homework assistance.

Alonso et al. (2017) inquired about the relationship between style of parental involvement at home and academic performance. In their study, 29,153 students from 933 schools participated in two 50-minute sessions over 2 days. Results showed that students whose parents showed high levels of communication as a parental style had better academic results than students with controlling guardians. Likewise, Lei, Cui, and Zhou (2018) conducted a meta-analysis of 69 independent studies using 196,473 participants to report a positive correlation between academic achievement and overall student engagement (i.e., behavioral, emotional, and cognitive). Student engagement entails how students are actively involved with educational tasks (Lei et al., 2018). All

the studies provided valid evidence to link parental involvement to academic success.

Boonk, Gijselaers, Ritzen, and Brand-Gruwel (2018) found that parental involvement

correlated with academic achievement in terms of the following variables: (a) reading at

home, (b) parents holding high standards for their children's academic achievement and

schooling, (c) communication between parents and children regarding school, and

(d) parental encouragement and support for learning.

Parental involvement and academic achievement are significant in age ranges

from elementary to adolescent stages. Shannon, Barry, DeGrace, and DiDonato (2015)

found that parental involvement mattered not only in K-12 grades, but also was essential

in improving academic efforts during the college years. Gordon and Cui (2014) used a

sample from Add Health to investigate the correlation between school-related parental

involvement and adolescents' academic achievement, along with the influence of

community poverty. Results showed that school-related parental involvement was

substantially weaker for adolescents residing in poor income neighborhoods. Mangore

and Adsul (2015) compared parent child-relationships and academic achievement among

male and female adolescents. Results indicated no difference between male and female

parent-child relationships and academic achievement.

Perkins et al. (2016) identified parental involvement as a significant predictor of

school bonding and academics by a group of adolescents in Grade 8. Parental

involvement is desirable at all grade levels of schooling. Historically, parents are usually

their children's first teacher, and parents can have a positive impact on their children's

academic outcomes (S. Kim & Hill, 2015). Parental involvement has been defined as

providing children with support at home to support their academic achievement (A. Kim, Sohyun, Hyun Chu, & Jihye, 2018). Recent research has focused on mothers, even though fathers share the task of improving students' academic efforts (Caughy, Oshri, Mills, Owen, & Dyer, 2017; Grolnick, 2015; S. Kim & Hill, 2015: Meuwissen & Carlson, 2018).

Some researchers have not found a positive relationship between parental involvement and students' academic achievement. In a study with a sample of 2,500 African American children and parents, Graves (2010) found that parental support for students' achievement was consistent for girls and boys in the lower grades. However, by Grade 3, parental involvement expectations decreased for boys but remained the same for girls. The data collected for this study came from the ECLS-K Longitudinal Kindergarten Third Grade public data file. In addition, an ECLS-K parent questionnaire was used in the study. Graves used logistic and multiple regression techniques to prove that gender differences were active in the elementary school setting.

Coleman and McNeese's (2009) results were similar to those reported by Graves (2010), indicating that parental involvement did not have a positive effect on student learning. Coleman and McNeese used questionnaires and interviews in their mixed methods research with a sample of 16,143 students in Grade 5 and some of the students' teachers and parents (51% men; 49% women). The literature addressed positive and negative effects of parental involvement to academic achievement.

Nitia, Almqvist, Brunnberg, and Granlund (2015) researched the relationships between academic achievement in reference to grades; student participation in school

activities; and parental involvement with emphasis on communication with the school.

The participants were 786 students, parents, and teachers. Data from each student were

retrieved through questionnaires containing an adapted version of Simeonsson, Carlsson,

Huntington, McMillen, and Brent's Measure of Participation in School Activities. On the

other hand, the teachers' and parents' questionnaires contained measures of parental

involvement that included 10 statements. Results indicated that student participation was

closely related to grades when viewed by teachers, but not by students. Importantly, the

study demonstrated that parental involvement had a negative correlation to academic

achievement (Nitia et al., 2015).

School administration and teachers should provide resources or services to parents

to assist with family support and school connectedness (Gore et al., 2016). This task may

help students to understand how and why participation is essential to the learning process.

Consequently, in the current study, I documented all of the participants' viewpoints. One

goal of my study was to explore the ways that parents could implement parental

involvement strategies to improve their children's learning.

Communication strategies. Research has indicated that communication is

important in informing parents about parental involvement (Ferrara, 2015; Hafizi & Papa,

2012; James, 2012; T. Johnson, 2009; Mayo & Siraj, 2015; Young et al., 2013). For

example, Muir (2012) explored parents' perceptions of helping their children with math

content in a pilot project with questionnaires and semistructured interviews using a

sample of students, teachers, and parents from three different classrooms. Muir found

math take-home intervention activities assisted with parents' and students' communication practices to improve student achievement.

The ways that teachers communicate to students with fidelity also matters. Teacher efficacy can be viewed as a form of practical support in the area of communication. K. R. Kim and Seo (2018) analyzed the results of 16 studies involving 4,130 teachers by using a meta-analysis approach. They found that the mean of teacher efficacy and students' academic achievement was significant.

Teacher efficacy refers to the belief of teachers that they can improve students' academic achievement and behaviors when the children lack motivation in both areas (K. R. Kim & Seo, 2018). Some educators use their communication strategies of teacher efficacy to motivate students. The language that teachers communicate while educating students can lead to higher student achievement.

Grammer, Coffman, Sidney, and Ornstein (2016) used data from a longitudinal investigation to explore an association between teachers' language during math instruction and the academic growth of students in Grade 2. Results indicated that teachers who used more cognitive-processing language during math lessons had an impact on the students' math fluency and calculation abilities than teachers who did not use that type of language (Grammer et al., 2016). The communicative style of parental involvement is associated with academic performance (Alonso et al., 2017). Communicating information effectively can attest to positive outcomes for students.

Significant research has shown that using technology to increase parental involvement has advantages and disadvantages (Kosaretskii & Chernyshova, 2013;

Olmstead, 2013; Pakter & Chen, 2013). For example, Olmstead (2013) used a mixed

methods design with surveys and semistructured interviews to obtain data from a sample

of 89 parents and seven teachers. Results indicated that schools continued to promote the

usage of technology devices (i.e., phone call systems, interactive websites, and parent

portals) to increase parental involvement (Olmstead, 2013). Kosaretskii and Chernyshova

(2013) found that less educated parents from a low-SES had low percentage rates of

using technology to communicate with their children's schools.

James (2012) and Pakter and Chen (2013) concluded that two-way

communication through the use of technology was more significant than one-way

communication (i.e., letters sent home, invitations, websites to read) to increase parental

involvement. On the other hand, one-way communication helped low-income parents

who could not afford to purchase and use certain technology devices. In particular, Pakter

and Chen used an empirical study to obtain quantitative and qualitative data from a

sample of 29 students and parents. Their results revealed that (a) the purchase of cell

phones by underprivileged parents had grown rapidly, (b) mobile text messaging alone

was not a productive in increasing parental involvement without a school-wide plan, and

(c) an association between parental involvement and students' academic achievement was

evident.

Stewart and Suldo (2011), as well as Xiao, Li, and Stanton (2011), found that

communicating with parents to volunteer and/or help with student educational activities

were positive forms of parental involvement practices. For example, Stewart and Suldo

found that collaborative support from parents, classmates, and teachers had a positive

impact on students' academic performance. As indicated in their study, Stewart and Suldo used a correlational analysis to explore the relationship among social support, mental health, and academic achievement based on a sample of 390 middle school students. The researchers found that parental involvement was the strongest predictor of all the components of mental health. Goldkind and Farmer (2013), Jeynes (2011a), and Lavenda (2011) found that inviting parents to school functions served as a communication practice to support parental involvement.

In contrast, based on a sample of 336 participants from a low-SES inner-city community, Xiao et al. (2011) studied the relationship between parental and youth perceptions of open communication with their families and the connection to the psychosocial adjustment of the youth. The Parent-Adolescent Open Communication Scale was used in this study to measure the communication of parents and youth. Results indicated that their perceptions of family communication were not conveyed in the same way. In other words, the parents and youth had different perspectives of the meaning of open communication. Xiao et al suggested that researchers explore the meaning of open communication so that parents and students would understand how to communicate more effectively. Xiao et al. also found that male youth were less likely than female youth to have more open communication. Without a doubt, female students expected more parental involvement than male students did.

Studies by Bower and Griffin (2011) as well as Taliaferro, DeCuir-Gunby, and Allen-Eckard (2009) indicated a positive relationship between parental involvement and communication. For example, using the Epstein model, Bower and Griffin implemented a

case study design with observations and semistructured interviews of two administrators and five teachers at a high-minority, low-performing elementary school. The researchers found that the school needed to develop parental involvement practices that could help the parents to communicate with their children. Bower and Griffin noted that more research is needed to provide African American and Latino parents with strategies to communicate with their children in support of their learning. This can be done because educators working collaboratively have unique knowledge and skills to form effective leadership cohorts to enhance student growth in academic areas of high-poverty schools (Reddy, Kettler, & Kurz, 2015). Bruine et al. (2014) asserted that teachers need training if they desire to have effective family-school partnerships. Educators should work with parents to educate, motivate, and inspire them to become catalysts in increasing students' academic achievement.

Research also has shown how counselors can assist parents by communicating different strategies to increase parental involvement in support of their children's education (Walker, Shenker, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2010). In particular, counselors can help parents to communicate with teachers at parent-teacher conferences, and they can develop workshops to improve student learning. Principals, teachers, and counselors in the school setting can work collaboratively to improve levels of parental involvement and students' academic performance.

Parents and community. The community needs to be informed of ways that parental involvement can help children with education endeavors (Berryhill, Riggins, & Gray, 2016; Dudovitz, Izadpanah, Chung, & Slusser, 2016; Ghazi et al., 2010; Pansiri &

Bulawa, 2013). For example, some researchers have suggested that schools develop interventions such as parent programs and policies in support of parental involvement, or seek parental perspectives to improve parental involvement (Crosby, Rasinski, Padak, & Yildirim, 2015; Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017; Pansiri & Bulawa, 2013; Semke & Sheridan, 2012; Vera et al., 2012).

The academic literature has indicated that parental involvement has been and continues to be low in poverty areas because of the parents' level of education and living conditions (Hafizi & Papa, 2012; Radu, 2011). Hilgendorf (2012) noted that more research about the ways that families from diverse economic backgrounds help children to learn could lead to the development of strategies to improve parental involvement. Home-school relationships are vital to support student learning in the community.

Christianakis (2011) conducted a qualitative study to explore teachers' perspectives of parental involvement using a sample of 15 teachers at an inner-city school. Findings revealed that parental involvement was viewed as the parents assisting the teachers; teachers were considered the boss, and the parents were the employees; educators need to focus on ways to collaborate with parents to improve student learning (Christianakis, 2011). S. Johnson, Baker, and Aupperlee (2009) completed a quantitative study to explore parent-teacher relationships using a sample of 483 parents and 431 teachers. Questionnaires were used to collect the data. The researchers found that schools needed to create quality parent-teacher activities to get minority and less educated parents to become advocates for their children's education. Results also showed that African American and Latino parents were less involved in their children's education and that

parents with more education were more involved than parents with less education (S. Johnson et al., 2009).

Some researchers have noted the ways that school counselors assist parents, schools, and the community to form partnerships to support student learning (Bryan & Henry, 2012; Griffin & Steen, 2010; Rule & Kyle, 2009). For example, counselors have used partnership models such as education, counseling, business, and/or family therapy to build relationships with schools and parents (Bryan & Henry, 2012). Rule and Kyle (2009) noted that community building is key when trying to involve parents in students' educational process. In a qualitative study of 205 participants from the American School Counselor Association, Griffin and Steen (2010) examined the ways that school counselors partnered with parents, schools, and the community. Results indicated that parents did not understand the meaning of partnerships. For an example, the parents collaborated with organizations to find solutions to problems, yet they did not know that the relationship was considered a partnership.

Parents need to analyze the ways that partnerships with the community were productive in the past. For example, parents and community stakeholders can work together to improve student learning. MacNeill (2009) found that some parents did not join community partnerships with stakeholders such as organizations or businesses that were available to help with educational tasks because of their lack of knowledge.

Bracke and Corts (2012) used a quantitative design to survey a sample of 231 parents to examine how the TPB supported parental involvement. They found that the parents believed that participating in their children's learning process in the home setting

was essential, they offered suggestions to increase parental involvement, and the parents'

had positive attitudes about parental involvement. Carolan-Silva (2011) and T. Johnson

(2009) asserted that parent-school community partnerships should develop programs to

learn about students' families and design educational opportunities to increase student

achievement with the support of parents.

Home visits are programs that some schools use to meet the parents and make

decisions about students' educational goals. For example, Stetson et al. (2012) conducted

a case study with five question Likert scales of 60 teachers and 60 parents to analyze the

effects of home visits. Results showed that positive relationships with parents grew and

student-teacher bonds increased (Stetson et al., 2012). Based on a sample of 114 teachers

and 153 parents at a low-income elementary school, Rule and Kyle (2009) had similar

findings that home visits were an effective project to promote parental involvement

strategies to assist parents who had questions about their children's learning. Parental

involvement can be used as a resource to help schools provide a quality education for

students in all communities (Carolan-Silva, 2011).

Home and school factors. Parental involvement has been linked to the different

views that educators and parents have about supporting students academically (Bellibas,

2015; Higgins & Katsipataki, 2015; McKenna & Millen, 2013; Shiffman, 2011).

Teachers who communicate with students' families gain background knowledge that can

help to improve students' learning (Dor & Rucker-Naidu, 2012; Hindin, 2010; Mendez,

2010). Researchers also have identified other factors of parental involvement: helping

with homework, attending school functions, and communicating with students (Baeck, 2010; McKenna & Millen, 2013; Muir, 2012).

The academic literature also has indicated that parental SES is associated with parental involvement (Baeck, 2010; Bartel, 2010; Hilgendorf, 2012; Radu, 2011; Vellymalay, 2012). Baeck (2010) used a quantitative study to explore parents' willingness to participate in student home and school activities. The survey findings revealed that educated parents spent more time supporting their children's learning process than less educated parents (Baeck, 2010).

Important to note is that home and school factors relevant to decision making have been found to have a significant association with promoting parental involvement to support student learning (Dor & Rucker-Naidu, 2012; James, 2012; Koutrouba, Antonopoulou, Tisitsas, & Zenakou, 2009). For example, James's (2012) review described the strategies that parents used to make decisions about their children's education. If parent helped their children with homework and projects, attended school events, and expressed concerns with their children's teachers, they felt that they were making the right decisions about their children's education. However, some parents thought that they were making the right decisions just to get their children to school daily, and they depended on the teachers to be the sole educators of their children.

Children who live in low-income areas have home and school factors that prevent them from improving their educational outcomes (Christianakis, 2011; Loughrey & Woods, 2010). In a study of a minority group, Bartel (2010) asserted that schools should get to know the parents of their students better because "the perceptions of parents herein

as a part of a lower socioeconomic group (Title I status) are valuable because less is

known about this population than about the middle and higher-income parents more often

studied" (p. 218). A sample of 92 African American parents and 26 students completed

semistructured interviews and pre- and postsurveys in Bartel's mixed methods study.

It is equally important to mention that parents from different SES backgrounds

operate differently. For example, Vellymalay (2012) conducted a quantitative study and

had 80 students complete questionnaires to find out their parents' SES background and

parental involvement tasks to support their children's education. Results indicated that

although all of the parents helped with their children's education, parents with a high SES

helped their children at home more often (Vellymalay, 2012).

Homework is a home and school factor that has been strategically researched with

parental involvement. To illustrate, Gonida and Cortina (2014) studied 282 students in

Grades 5 and 8, along with one parent from each family, using surveys to collect their

data to see if different types of parental involvement in homework was predicted by

mastery or performance goals; beliefs in the children's academic efficacy; and

predictions of student achievement goal orientations, efficacy beliefs, and achievement.

Responses were scored on a 5-point Likert type scale of responses ranging from 1 to 5.

Results indicated that forms of parental homework involvement were associated with

different factors, yet parent autonomy support was valued the most (Gonida & Corina,

2014).

In a similar fashion, Moroni, Dumont, Trautwein, Niggli, and Baeriswyl (2015)

explored the most common type of parental involvement, namely, assistance with

homework, to determine the effectiveness of the quality and quantity aspects. They used longitudinal questionnaire data from 1,685 Grade 6 students. Results indicated that the total times that parents helped children with homework using invasive help was negatively associated with student achievement, whereas homework assistance that was viewed as supportive had a positive effect on achievement (Moroni et al., 2015). In Wilder's (2014) study, homework as a form of parental involvement did not increase student learning. Many factors can lead to negative or positive aspects of home and school factors pertaining to parental involvement measures.

Home and school factors have correlated in different categories that effect student achievement (Griffin & Galassi, 2010; St. George, 2009; Van Voorhis, 2011). Specifically, St. George (2009) used a qualitative study with focus groups that involved a sample of 10 parents and 10 teachers. Results identified time, communication, and roles of parents and teachers as factors that needed to be understood (St. George, 2009).

Peterson et al. (2011) found that parents and students blamed the teachers but that teachers blamed the parents and students for being responsible for the learners' education. Peterson et al. used focus groups of parents and teachers to obtain their opinions regarding who was responsible for student learning. Griffin and Galassi (2010) used a qualitative approach with focus groups using 29 parents to identify barriers to parental involvement that prohibited improvements in students' academic performance. Results showed that communication barriers between parents and teachers, along with a lack of community resources, were a problem (Griffin & Galassi, 2010). Mendez et al. (2009) used a mixed-methods design with questionnaires and interviews to obtain their

data from a sample of 201 low-SES parents. These researchers found that low parental involvement needed to be addressed.

Implications

The lack of parental involvement has long been an issue in the field of education. To address this issue, it is important that school personnel encourage parents to be supportive of their children's education (Domina, 2005; Driessen, Smit, & Sleegers, 2005; Edwards & Warin, 1999; Epstein, 1995; Fan & Chen, 2001; Ferrara, 2015; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Lee & Bowen, 2006). I used Epstein's model for the conceptual framework of the study in order to analyze parents' perceptions. According to Radzi et al. (2010), the Epstein model components of positive home conditions, communication, involvement at school, home learning activities, shared decision making, and community partnerships are essential to assist parents. I did not use the model at the same level to collect information on teachers' perceptions of parental involvement.

Specifically, teachers' perceptions about parental involvement can positively or negatively impact parents' participation in the school setting (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). However, there has been a gap in using this framework to evaluate teachers' perceptions of parental involvement. Likewise, a comparison of parents' and teachers' perceptions using the Epstein model could contribute to understanding the two parties' perceptions. In addition, using the attitudes and beliefs, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control components of the TPB helped to evaluate the parents' and teachers' perceptions of parental involvement in more depth by providing specific information to explain why parents were or were not involved in their children's educational activities.

Summary

This research is important because the findings may provide more information to others about the perceptions of parents and teachers about parental involvement and the efforts to help students to become successful adults. The topics of academic achievement, home and school factors, parents and community, and communication strategies were addressed to comprehend the perceptions of involvement to improve student learning. The theoretical frameworks also aligned with the themes covered in the literature review. Based on the literature, it became clear that teachers and parents are the most important individuals working with students to enhance their educational endeavors. In the next section, I discuss the research methodology.

Section 2: The Methodology

Research Design and Approach

I used an exploratory, phenomenological approach to examine the perceptions of parents and teachers toward parental involvement and its impact on students' academic achievement. I interviewed teachers and parents in various situations. Phenomenological research focuses on the descriptions of the participants' shared lived experiences (McMillian & Schumacher, 2001; Patton, 2002). Phenomenologists focus on the ways that phenomena are put together to make sense to the world (Patton, 2002).

Phenomenology refers to the meaning and/or essence of things that cannot be observed (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenologists are more focused on learning about the participants' lived experience rather than how and when things happen over time (Van Manen, 1990). For example, the participants' thoughts, feelings, and desires were revealed to add more details to the phenomenon that I was studying (see Merriam, 2009). Phenomenological inquiry allows researchers to investigate the participants' experiences of given situations (Merriam, 2009). In the current study, the focus was on obtaining the perceptions of parents and teachers about parental involvement to support student performance.

Phenomenologists concentrate on obtaining the meaning and essence of human experience and focus mainly on conducting interviews as an unbiased technique to analyze what the experiences mean to the study participants (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). Interviewing parents and teachers to gather their perceptions of parental involvement was a vital part of the current study. I did not seek to obtain secondhand

experiences because conducting in-depth interviews with individuals who had lived the phenomenon was preferable (see Patton, 2002). The interviews allowed me to gain a deeper interpretation of the phenomenon. According to Lodico et al. (2010), "Wanting to understand the human experience and how experiences are interpreted differently by different people would certainly be an appropriate reason to conduct a phenomenological study" (p. 271).

Population and Sample

The target population comprised approximately 25 teachers and 400 parents. I used purposeful sampling to select the participants to understand the perceptions of the parents and teachers about parental involvement (see Creswell, 2012). I selected five teachers and 10 parents from the target population who were interested in improving parental involvement to promote students' learning. This small sample allowed me to work with a more manageable group of teachers and parents (see Lodico et al., 2010).

To join the study, the teachers had to meet the following criteria: They had to be tenured, have a degree from an accredited 4-year college, hold a valid Tennessee teaching license, have at least 5 years of teaching experience, and have received above expectations or significantly above expectations on evaluations during the first 2 years of teaching. According to MER Elementary, 92% of the teachers were tenured. MER Elementary had two new teachers join the staff during the school year when the study took place. According to study site policy, teachers with less than 5 years of experience were hired on a probationary status, which meant they were not considered the most qualified teachers. I recruited the parents and teachers who volunteered to join the project

study (see Appendix A) from those who expressed an interest in identifying and communicating parental involvement techniques and strategies to enhance student learning.

I handed out letters of invitation to solicit the voluntary participation of parents and teachers. In addition, to incorporate diversity in my sample, I wrote the invitation letter in Spanish for the parents of students of English as a second language (ESL) at the school. I also used a survey for parents (see Appendix B) and teachers (Appendix C) to collect demographic data to obtain a pool of potential participants from which to select my sample. The focus of the parent survey allowed involved and noninvolved parents to participate in the study. The teacher survey was organized to identify levels of teachers' experience with the students. I then had a pool of potential participants to choose from to complete this study. I wanted to be able to describe the range of my sample. I used my results to assist with writing the limitations of the study. The interviewed parents and teachers reported their perceptions of parental involvement in order to improve student learning. The diverse demographics of the participants are reported in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1

Summary of Parental Demographics

Demographic characteristics	Female	Male	Total (*n* = 10)	%
Age				
18-24	1		1	10%
25-35	2		2	20%
36-46	5		5	50%
47 or above	1	1	2	20%
Education				
High school diploma	5			50%
Bachelor's degree	1			10%
Postcollege degree	3	1		40%
Race				
African American	9	1		100%
Employment status				
Part-time	2			20%
Full-time	5	1		60%
Yearly income				
$10,000 or below	1			10%
$10,000-$20,000	4			40%
$30,000 or above	3	1		40%
Prefer not to answer	1			10%

Table 2

Summary of Teachers' Demographics

Demographic characteristics	Female	Male	Total	%
Race				
African American	5			100%
Age				
41-50	3			60%
51 or above	2			40%
Educational background				
Master's degree	5			100%
Teaching employment				
11-16 years	3			60%
17 or above	2			40%
Grades taught				
Pre-K	3			28%
K-2 Primary	4			36%
3-5 Intermediate	4			36%

I used different methods to recruit the parents. To start, I placed their invitation

letters in the front office of the school with a dropbox to collect accepted invitations. To

incorporate diversity in my sample, I wrote the invitation letters in Spanish for the parents of ESL students. I spoke with the principal at MER Elementary School, and she mentioned opportunities to send invitations to the parents. She sent out a Phone Blast to all parents to inform them about the study. In addition, she agreed to let me choose dates and times to disseminate the parent invitation letters. I attended a Title I/ Meet and Greet Night at MER Elementary school to accomplish this. During this particular night, I was able to schedule many of my interviews. Using these methods, I was able to attract parents who were engaged in different levels of parental involvement. The strategies targeted parents who worked multiple jobs, had jobs that did not allow them to attend normal parental involvement meetings, were from single-parent households, were married, did not read their children's school communications on a regular basis, and were involved in their child's education.

I reached the teachers in several ways. First, I went to the MER Elementary website to locate the teachers. Next, I e-mailed the invitation letter to each teacher. I also put invitation letters in the teachers' mailboxes. I set invitation letters for teachers at the front office of the school with a dropbox to collect accepted invitations. I narrowed the selection of teachers in two ways: (a) those who met the criteria required to participate in the study, and (b) those who indicated a willingness to be interviewed for 20 to 30 minutes. Only completed invitations in the school's dropbox and from the face-to-face interview scheduling were considered.

Data Collection Procedures

I collected the data from the responses to the face-to-face interviews (Creswell, 2012). The interviews were held in private study rooms in public libraries in the city. The participants chose the most convenient libraries for them. Most interviews were 20 to 30 minutes. I recorded the participants' responses using a digital voice recorder. I have attended professional development workshops addressing ways to support parental involvement strategies, and I have taught students whose parents who supported their children's educational success. I also have taught some groups of students with parents who did not support the students.

As the researcher, I remained neutral and stayed focused on the study and the participants' responses during the interviews. Before conducting the interviews, I recorded my personal feelings about the phenomenon in a reflective journal. I also used époche to read the responses and become aware of any personal bias that I might have had in regard to the study (see Merriam, 2009). After that, the interviews with the teachers and parents commenced.

Interview Protocol

I used an interview protocol to direct the interviews with the parents (see Appendix D) and the teachers (see Appendix E). The focus of the surveys allowed involved and noninvolved parents to provide responses. At the beginning of all interviews, I asked the participants to complete a short demographic survey. Their responses to the demographic survey allowed me to describe the participants later in the study. The open-ended interview questions gave the participants the opportunity to

answer in as much detail as they wanted to share. I also asked probing questions. The interview protocol ensured the consistency of the interview process for all participants.

Parent interview questions. I developed the 10 open-ended interview questions for the parents based on the TPB to help to answer the RQs. of this study. The 10 questions focused on the attitudes and beliefs, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral controls that are components of the TPB. I asked the interview questions to gain a better understanding of the RQs (see Maxwell, 1996).

Teacher interview questions. I asked 10 open-ended questions adapted from Epstein's model (Epstein et al., 2009) to interview the teachers. The 10 questions used indicate a relationship with Epstein's six components of positive home conditions, communication, involvement at school, home learning activities, shared decision making, and community partnerships.

Data Analysis

Introduction

I transcribed the digitally recorded interview information verbatim. I then read and reviewed the data to ensure that all details of the interviews were present. Following Maxwell's (2013) recommendations, I made notes and memos about what I observed in the data to develop ideas about categories and relationships. I used Microsoft Excel spreadsheets to organize, sort, and code the information. Using the Excel spreadsheets, I also created matrixes to assist with the data analysis. The first two matrixes contained the participants' recorded answers to the interview questions. I interviewed two groups of participants.

The first matrix focused on the parents' responses to the interview questions. In the heading across the top, I used abbreviations P1, P2, and so on, to identify the parents and ensure that I noted their quoted responses. On the left side of the matrix, I listed the parents' interview questions to be able view the responses from the parents in a legitimate fashion.

The second matrix focused on the teachers' responses. Teachers were identified as T1, T2, and so on, to ensure that the quoted responses were exact. The left side of the matrix listed the teachers' 10 interview questions. The matrixes served as a visual display of the systematic data analysis process by helping to compare similarities, contrast differences, and establish patterns and themes. I used a phenomenological analysis approach to analyze the data.

Steps of Data Analysis

The steps of Moustakas's (1994) phenomenological model are époche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis of texture and structure (Patton, 2002). During the époche stage, I set aside my personal feelings and judgments to gain clarity about the phenomenon (Patton, 2002). I made sure that my understandings, biases, and knowledge were not acted on because the focus was to revisit the phenomenon with a clear approach (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological reduction refers to bracketing the data, also known as coding. The most vital categorizing strategy in qualitative research is coding (Maxwell, 2013). Coding has several steps: locating key phrases and statements that speak directly about the phenomenon, interpreting meanings of the phrases, obtaining the participants' interpretations of the phrases and/or statements,

investigating the meanings of recurring features, and offering statements and definitions of the phenomenon (Patton, 2002).

I identified 30 codes after analyzing the interview response from the parents and teachers. Then, I reviewed the initial codes for redundancy and was able to identify 10 final codes for the parents and 12 final codes for the teachers (see Appendices F & G). After coding the data, I organized them into clusters, eliminated irrelevant or overlapping data, and identified themes (Patton, 2002). Three themes emerged from the coding. Although other themes did arise, they were not considered because there was insufficient research literature to support them.

During the next step, the imaginative variation, I created expanded versions of the themes. The process then moved to a "structural description" that detailed how the participants experienced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The interview responses from the parents and teachers played a major key factor within this stage. The last step of phenomenological analysis involved the synthesis of texture and structure of the data. The highlight of this step integrated all of the data to reveal the meanings and essences of the experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Trustworthiness

I ensured the trustworthiness of my study by making it credible and transferable. I asked a teacher who had an EdD degree to serve as a peer reviewer. This teacher had previous experience with research practices that enabled her to understand the material. During this process, the teacher and I worked at the same location. She did not have any background knowledge of the interviewed participants at the school in this study. My

sample came from a school different from the one that we worked at on a daily basis. The peer reviewer received the materials without any identifiers. The names were replaced with alphanumerical codes when I coded the participants' transcriptions. I also removed any information that revealed the participants' identities.

She analyzed the transcriptions to understand the information. After this procedure, we discussed the data to see if we agreed on the emergent themes and codes. We had to view the data twice to ensure that all of the data were synthesized. Most importantly, the teacher and I agreed on three emergent themes.

Credibility

I used member checking to ensure credibility. I contacted the participants by phone to set up times to give them hard copies of their individual interview responses. In addition, I asked them to provide their feedback on those copies. I included my phone number and e-mail address so that the participants could convey their agreement or disagreement with the transcribed interview responses. My phone number was listed because some participants did not have computer access.

As a transferability measure, I made sure that I took quick descriptive notes as I interviewed the participants. All data analysis sentences and comments from the hard copy documents and audio files on a flash drive were printed and stored in a locked filing cabinet in my private home. Only I have access to the key of the file cabinet. In addition, I stored the participants' transcriptions and other files on my password-protected personal computer. I am the only individual who knows that password. I wrote down personal thoughts and feelings in my research log about the research topic before interviewing the

participants to reduce bias. Reviewing my notes helped me to remain neutral during research process.

Participants' Protection and Rights

I used several measures to ensure the ethical protection of all participants in the study. First, I received approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the study (IRB approval #08-14-15-0254568). In preparation to conduct the study, I completed the researcher's confirmation of ethical standards compliance, informed consent, letter of cooperation, and a human research protection training certificate. Participation in the study was voluntary. The teachers and parents signed a consent form to confirm that they had joined the study voluntarily and had met the criteria to be in the study. I did not list the participants' names on any of the documents in an effort to comply with issues of confidentiality. As already mentioned, the participants were identified as P1, T1, and so on. To protect the participants from harm, the interviews were held in private conference or study rooms at one of the 18 library locations in the city. This measure was chosen because the participants did not want anyone at MER Elementary School to know that they were in a study pertaining to their children's school. All field notes and data on flash drives were printed and stored in a locked file cabinet in my home. Only I have a key to the file cabinet.

To summarize, this section focused on the research design, population and sample, data collection and analysis procedures, interview questions, and participants' protection and rights. A phenomenological research method was chosen to understand the meaning, structure, and essence of the participants lived experiences of the phenomenon.

A phenomenological analysis was used to analyze the data. The steps involved époche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis of texture and structure.

Assumptions and Limitations

One assumption was that the teachers and parents would answer the interview and probing questions honestly to describe their perceptions of parental involvement. Another assumption was that the findings might help schools to develop interventions to help parents and teachers to collaborate to support student achievement. One limitation of the study was that all of the participants came from one school. Another limitation was that because some parents of ESL students did not want to participate because of a language barrier, data from that part of the school population were not addressed.

Research Results

After rereading the transcriptions, I placed the responses into Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, coded the information, and removed redundant words and phrases. Three themes emerged from the data analysis: parenting and learning at home, volunteering and decision making, and communicating and collaborating with the community. The results aligned with Epstein model (Epstein et al., 2009), and its six components of family involvement practices (i.e., positive home conditions, communication, involvement at school, home learning activities, and shared decision making within the school and within community partnerships) were associated with the resulting codes and themes (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Epstein et al., 2009). Table 3 illustrates the association of the emergent

themes to the RQs. In the next section, I explain how the interview questions were

connected to the emergent themes.

Table 3

Relationship of Themes to RQs

Theme	Identified theme	RQ1	RQ2	RQ3
1	Parenting and learning at home	X	X	X
2	Volunteering and decision making	X	X	X
3	Communicating and collaborating with the community	X	X	X

Research Findings

The identified themes of parenting and learning at home, volunteering and

decision making, and communicating and collaborating with the community are

highlighted as the focus of results. All three themes are explained with supporting

components to connect the information to the interview questions and RQs. Teachers and

parents expressed similar and different comments. Their lack of common understanding

of parental involvement was the gap in practice that was the focus of this study.

The participants' answers to their respective interview questions demonstrated

support for the RQs and assisted in the emergence of the three themes. Open-ended

interview questions are the main data collection tool in qualitative studies (McMillan &

Schumacher, 2001). For this phenomenological study, I developed the interview

questions to obtain the participants' responses to the lived experience of the phenomenon.

All 10 interview questions asked of the parents and teachers aligned interchangeably with

all three RQs.

Theme 1, parenting and learning at home, emerged from several parent

subthemes: assisting with homework, being responsible for their children's education,

helping with parents' prior knowledge, and providing distraction-free work areas. The teacher subthemes of teachers' perceptions of parental engagement and students' desire for homework assistance complemented Theme 1.

Theme 2, volunteering and decision making, emerged from several parent subthemes: volunteering, helping their children with education, improving participation barriers with parents, and strengthening confidence toward education. Teacher subthemes were learning groups, differentiated activities, and engaging resources. Reading through the findings, I noted that the teachers made different decisions about the ways that they helped students during the learning process.

Theme 3, communicating and collaborating with the community, was formulated from the parent subthemes of communicating with teachers and of providing resources to parents. Teacher subthemes that complemented the parent subthemes of communication were parent-teacher meetings, telephone conversations, parent-teacher conferences, and professional developments. The teacher subthemes of reward systems, volunteering, and educational facilities also supported Theme 3. The rest of this section highlights each theme and its alignment with the RQs.

Parenting and Learning at Home

Evidence for Theme 1, parenting and learning at home, supported RQ1, RQ2, RQ3 based on the responses to Parent Interview Questions 1 to 4, and 6, and Teacher Interview Questions 1 and 2. Parents and teachers had lived experiences with parental involvement. The following subthemes supported Theme 1: homework assistance,

parents are responsible for their children's education, helping with parents' prior

knowledge, teachers' perceptions of parental engagement, and a distraction-free area.

Parents' Perceptions

    Homework assistance. The parents agreed that helping their children with

homework was a meaningful task. Helping their children with homework, checking

answers, making sure that the work area was free from distractions, and promoting

education as a positive factor to children were several tasks of reported involvement

(Young et al., 2013).

    P3 said:

Parental involvement means that I am available to my child for help. I am as

active as I can be. I'm a working parent, so I try to be active in her school as

much as I can be. I am available to her for homework or if she has a project. I

make myself available. I make sure I know her teachers and I go to parent teacher

conferences.

Other participants discussed the importance of assisting their children with

homework. P1, for example, explained how she felt when her child asked questions about

homework:

I like that, especially when it may help me since a lot of things are done

differently than the way I was taught. Especially, the new math, so there are

things she may ask that I may not understand. I may tell her the old way of doing

things, and I say that may not work with them now. I ask her what did she learned

in class and to explain the way that they have to do it? I have old English and

math books, and I will pull them out to review to make sure I'm doing it right to try to help her.

In the same way, P4 explained why parents are responsible for educating their children:

Parents are responsible for educating their children. It's not the child's responsibility. They did not ask to come here, and we as parents need to step up and do what we have to do for our children. That's a part of our daily duty is to take care of our children, and education is a big percentage of raising a child. Education it is!

Parents responsible for their children's education. I asked the parents to indicate who was responsible for their child's education. The parents had the opportunity to answer this question holistically. Of the 10 parents, six felt solely responsible, and four said that it was a parent-teacher combination.

For example, P3 noted, "I think the parent is the first educator because when my child went to preschool she knew everything she needed to know. I think the teacher is responsible for the curriculum."

Other interviewees agreed that they were responsible for educating their children.

P4 shared that "parents are responsible for their children. They did not ask to come here and we as parents need to step up and do what we have to do for our children."

P5 responded: "Me because your home environment is your very first learning environment regardless of anything."

Parents lead their children to success in the early stages of their lives (Trealout, 2014). However, P1, 2, 4, and 9 believed that both parents and teachers are responsible for student learning.

P1 expressed, "It starts at home with the parents and transitions to the teachers and whoever else is a role model to the child."

As derived from the literature, promoting parent- teacher collaborations to assist students with improving their education in forms of homework, behaviors, and academics are important (Cunha et al., 2015).

Helping with parents' prior knowledge. Participants explained how prior knowledge supported their children with homework activities. When speaking about this generalization, most parents gave examples from their own educational backgrounds.

P7 stated, "Just basically going off what I know. The more I know the better I can teach my child."

P8 asserted that her education provided the necessary support to assist her child with homework tasks.

When describing how prior knowledge helped with educational endeavors for her child, P9 revealed that her education only consists of a high school diploma and a few college hours. P9 also stated, "It's imperative to make sure my children go further than I did and that's my number one goal is to make sure they get a college degree."

Distraction-free work area. When I asked the parents what positive home conditions could help their children with home learning activities, six of the 10 parents indicated that their children needed to be in a quiet area without a television.

While communicating her experience, P2 stated, "Quiet environment, television off, and phone off."

Similarly, P3 indicated that "having a quiet place to study … turn the television off. You know no electronics unless it for the use of homework. Just having a quiet and peaceful environment."

In contrast, P7 and P10 indicated that helping their children with homework in a clean environment played a role in student learning.

P7 noted that "a clean environment for sure will help, maybe a computer if needed, a desk to sit at to do homework, and food."

P10 expressed, "I don't let her watch TV and just a clean environment."

To sum up, any activity to support student learning was how the parents helped their children with homework and created an environment in the home to complete homework (Young et al., 2013).

Teacher Perceptions

Parenting. All five teachers were asked in Teacher Interview Question 1 what parental involvement meant to them. All of them mentioned parents being actively engaged and supporting their children's education (Young et al., 2013).

T1 stated, "It means exactly what it says that parents are involved in every aspect of their children's lives. They're meaningfully involved and are willing to help them progress to their fullest potential."

T2 agreed:

Parental involvement means to me that parents are involved with their children academically, social, and cognitive progress at school as well as at home. I can elaborate more. If that means a parent needs to be present at school to assist with their child's education then that's what I believe. Not just to be doing homework at home, but be physically involved at school in their child's education. Asking questions to see what's going on. Volunteering, it's important for children to see their parents volunteer at the school level because it takes a bridge between school and home to make a successful student to make a productive citizen of society.

T3 remarked, "Parental involvement to me is the involvement of parents throughout their children's education as it refers to being a part of the team."

T4 and T5 mentioned parental involvement in similar ways. In summary, all teacher participants expressed similar views about parental involvement: parents assisting their children with student learning.

Homework assistance. The teachers' responses highlighted that students' desire to seek assistance from their parents was a concern. This task displayed a form of parental involvement similar to the teachers' perceptions of parental engagement. The teachers were asked how often they believed that students asked for help at home with assignments. The five teachers gave quite responses that ranged from once a week to two times a week, every day, 50% of the time, and "It depends on the child."

According to T1, the timing should be "maybe once a week the older students probably attempt to do their homework. All younger students probably ask daily."

Viewed from a different perspective, T2 stated:

In my opinion, I would say students probably on average maybe ask for help two

times per week at home. I believe this because of personal experience because

some students don't want to bother their parents or burden their parents on school

assignments that they have. Most students will try to do the work on their own. A

lot of times these days, the schoolwork is different than what the parents have

experienced when they were in school. It's hard sometimes for parents to

understand the questions that their children are asking. They don't know what's

going on in the school because they really aren't that involved, so they don't

know what to tell their children. Their children basically seemly know this.

Moreover, T3, T4, and T5 had perceptions that were different.

T3 suggested that "I would think a student would ask for help at home every day."

T4 stated:

In my opinion, I think 50% of the time students may ask for help. I think it's more

reading than it is math because students that I work with struggle with reading

more than math and that's involving science and social studies.

T5 said that asking for help depends truly on the child's needs.

The parents and the teachers expressed concerns about assisting with homework,

but there were some differences in describing these concerns. The parents' rationale was

that they supported their children with homework, whereas the teachers felt that parental

involvement was centered on the parents playing an active role in the students' learning.

However, the teachers indicated that helping with homework was a concern. In particular,

they mentioned how often students asked their parents to assist with homework. Most of the five teachers responded differently when describing how often the students wanted help with educational tasks. This finding shows that parents and teachers needed to work more closely to narrow the gap of communication.

The other subthemes were split between the two groups, but they complemented each other in providing support for this theme. The parent subthemes of parents' responsible for their children, helping with parents' prior knowledge, and distraction-free work area showcased examples of real lived experiences of parenting and learning at home. Most of the parents felt totally responsible for their children's education. The parents also indicated that prior knowledge of education assisted with their children's learning process. In addition, the parents mentioned that providing their children with distraction-free work areas helped their children to concentrate on school assignments. The teacher subtheme presented that parenting meant that parents were involved in all aspects of the students' lives, be they academic, social, or emotional. The teacher and parent subthemes built on the other to develop the emergent theme of parenting and learning at home.

Volunteering and Decision Making

Evidence from Theme 2, volunteering and decision making, supported RQ1, RQ2, RQ3 and originated from responses to Parent Interview Questions 8, 9, and 10, and Teacher Interview Questions 4 and 6. The responses to these questions conveyed the parents' engagement in school activities. The participants attended school functions to gain awareness of their children's schoolwork and to learn new information indicative of

academic socialization (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). The following components

supported Theme 2: volunteering, helping their children with education, participation

barrier with parents, confidence toward education, learning groups, differentiated

activities, and engaging resources. Each component and supporting details are discussed

next.

Parent Perceptions

    Volunteering. All 10 parents identified several ways that they volunteered at the

school to support student learning. Volunteering is a type of parental involvement that

consists of assisting at school activities and/or attending parent meetings (Hayes, 2011).

    Speaking about involvement in volunteering with activities P6 stated:

    I try to volunteer as much as possible. I also get books myself with the grade

    sessions that they are in. When I purchase them, I also take them to the school so

    that the teachers can use them, make copies and teach some to the kids out of

    them because all kids are not on the grade level that their actually on. I take

    different books. I go to parent-teacher conferences. I go to open houses. I go to

    Title 1 meetings. Every meeting that they have, I'm there. I don't miss one.

    Consistent with P6, P7 pointed out that she attended open houses to find out when

the teachers needed volunteers for school events. In addition, P7 chaperoned field trips

and helped the school to plan events for the school year. All 10 parents volunteered at

open houses, field trips, parent-teacher conferences, programs, and PTO and/or Title 1

meetings. To conclude, all parent participants' responses indicated that volunteering was

a form of parental involvement that gave parents information to support their children's

homework activities. The literature has shown that attending open houses, parent conferences, and school functions is associated with parents supporting their children (Shen, Washington, Palmer, & Xia, 2014).

Helping their children with education. Although some of the parents had participation barriers to participating in school activities, the interviewees spoke positively about assisting their children with homework, purchasing resources, and attending school events.

When speaking about helping her child with student learning, P3 stated:

Anytime she has a project we work on that together. If she needs to get to the library, I make sure she gets to the library. If she needs poster boards and supplies, I make sure she has everything she needs to be successful in school. I make sure her home life is stress free as possible, so that she gets her sleep, go to bed on time, and wake up on time. Just trying to make sure her home life is stress free as possible.

As a means to support student learning, P6 indicated, "Well since they're all in elementary, I help them with homework, and I try to volunteer as much as I can at their school."

The parents displayed academic instruction and academic socialization, types of parental involvement that have demonstrated a positive effect on student performance (Sy, Gottfried, & Gottfried, 2013).

Participation barrier for parents. In addition to communicating with their children's teachers, the parents stated that some participation barriers prevented their

engagement in school activities. Six of the 10 parents stated that their busy work schedules hindered attendance at school activities. P1, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 10 disclosed this information.

P5 indicated, "The only barrier would honestly be work. Work would only be the barrier because sometimes my schedule varies from day to day, so if I'm at work during that time I can't be there."

Three of the parents did not mention any participation barriers. To summarize, P6 expressed that her participation barrier was communication with the principal:

The principal is not a listener. She's always on the go. She never has time. She likes to make phone calls after 8:00 at night. She's just not supportive like she should be. She don't have children. She shows favoritism, and she don't have the concepts of being a parent.

Confidence toward education. The parents described the ways that they demonstrated parental involvement with their children. Most of their details involved attending school meetings and programs, and/or volunteering.

P5 seemed confident as she explained how she supported her child's education at school functions:

Well, of course, I go to the programs that they have, the PTO meetings, the open houses, and the parent-teacher conferences. The teachers always be like, "Why are you here? You don't need to be here. Your child is doing fine." I just try to be a little more involved as much as I can sometimes. I take off work just to be there.

P1, 2, 4, 6, 7, and 10 responded like P5 did by expressing a positive notion toward educating their children.

P6 revealed that she attended school events, but where she focused mainly on were the necessities that her child needed to operate on a daily basis. She explained:

Being able to participate in school with them and taking care of them properly financially. By making sure they have food, a roof, lights, water, gas, clothes, and shoes. I mean making sure that needs are taking care of before their wants.

Parents can promote new skills and/or concepts to their children in many ways, including teaching values, assisting with schoolwork at home, and attending school events (Bramesfeld et al., 2013).

Teacher Perceptions

Learning groups. Several teachers used the strategy of placing students into learning groups to reinforce their learning.

T1 gave an example:

I group them according to ability to do several small groups thorough out the day. I come up with a variety of activities in my centers to meet each one. I give them something they can do and something to challenge them, as well.

Other participants shared similar thoughts. T2 said that in order to meet the students' learning style needs, she used different level groups to improve student learning. T4 made remarks similar to those of T1 and T2.

Differentiated activities. Just as the teachers used learning groups as a strategy to reinforce learning, they also used differentiated activities to support student learning.

Teachers and instructional interventionists should become aware of students' background by communicating with them and their parents (Pinder, 2012). T2 commented that she used learning groups and also incorporated aspects of differentiation with activities along with scaffolding.

As a means to show a demonstration of differentiation, T3 stated:

Because students have different styles of learning, I incorporate activities that will be differentiated according to the needs of that particular child. I try as much as possible to touch bases one on one with each child at least each day in my classroom.

T5 believed that providing students with interactive activities and projects reinforced their learning. All of the teachers had different educational views. What was common for all participants, however, was that differentiation help many of them to improve student performance.

Engaging resources. The teachers also mentioned using engaging resources as a strategy to reinforce learning. Several of the teachers suggested that the school should send home educational resources to inform and engage the parents. Resources such as home school books target two-way communication and reinforce learning (Kirkbride, 2014). Eighty percent of the teachers took extra time to explain learning content to the parents so that they could assist their children.

T2 asserted:

I will take a little time out if anyone ever needs it. I will sit down and break down the material to tell how the assignment needs to be done and what needs to be

done. A lot of one-on-one time with parents and a lot of parents appreciate that more.

According to previous research, teachers who show parents that they care by providing educational knowledge empower them to interact with their children (Sawyer, 2015).

The teachers and the parents volunteered to help students with learning tasks and made decisions along the way so that their assistance would help to improve students' academic achievement. For example, parent subthemes of volunteering, helping their children with education, participation barrier with parent, and confidence toward education helped to develop Theme 2. The teacher subthemes of learning groups, differentiated activities, and engaging resources helped to support the decision-making component of Theme 2. Results confirmed that the teachers made decisions regarding their use of certain strategies to reinforce student learning.

Communicating and Collaborating with Community

Evidence from Theme 3, communicating and collaborating with the community, supported RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3. The responses to Parent Interview Questions 5 and 7 and Teacher Interview Questions 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, and 10 supported Theme 3. The responses to these questions identified the forms of communication among the school, community stakeholders, and parents. As noted in the literature, effective communication is essential among parents, teachers, and administrators (Malone, 2015). Several factors supported the subthemes of communication with teachers, parent-teacher meetings, telephone conversations, parent-teacher conferences, professional developments, provision of

resources to parents, reward systems, and educational facilities. School efforts to build

partnerships with parents are required (Sawyer, 2015).

Parent Perceptions

Communication with teachers. Nine parents mentioned visiting the school to

communicate with their children's teachers. Four parents communicated with the teachers

strictly through parent-teacher conferences.

When speaking about the kinds of means to ask their children's teachers

questions, P7 noted, "I use the means through the school. I'll set up conferences."

Five parents confirmed that they visited the school to ask the teachers and/or

administration questions. P1 also attended PTO meetings. However, P5 did not engage in

school activities to communicate with her child's teacher. As she explained, "I will call

the school. I let all the teachers know that you can call me personally because my phone

is on 24 hours a day. You can text me or e-mail me."

Seven of the 10 parents stated that they would call the school to gain information

to assist their children with learning. All of the parents demonstrated active engagement

with their children's teachers, a finding confirming previous results in the literature that

active engagement happens when parents are involved in school events (Young et al.,

2013).

Providing resources to parents. For parents to communicate with school staff on

a regular basis, teachers must adjust to different cultural norms and welcome parents as

partners to help with student learning (Sawyer, 2015). The parents were asked, "What are

ways the school can help assist you with learning new strategies to support your child's

learning?" The parents gave a variety of generalizations in response to this question.

P1 stated:

Maybe have a learning lab for parents to where they can grasp the new concepts

of what's going on or create a manual about the new things that are changing

when you go to open house. Parents don't know the new material unless they go

online and read to see.

While speaking about how the school could help parents to support their children,

P2 responded, "Contact me more and provide me with what's going on in the classroom

to help my child with different strategies and techniques. They can have time set aside for

PTA meetings afterschool or once a month on Saturday."

P3 asserted:

I think schools should make curriculum guides available to parents. I don't see

why that is something that is not given during registration. Why not give out

curriculum guides so that we can see what the kids are required to know each

year. That would be something to benefit parents and you could just follow along

every 9 weeks. You will know what the kid is going to be learning that particular

9 weeks or a syllabus would be good.

Concerning how the school could assist parents to help improve student

achievement, P4 suggested that school personnel engage in "listening to parents concerns

as to why they think their children or child is struggling. Umm…offering assistance to

what that parent is complaining about in a timely manner."

P8 noted:

I feel parents should be able to come to the school and sit down in the classroom

with them, so that will help the child and parent to really understand what is going

on. If you don't have any sort of assistance to this child's thinking, the mom can

come by. I feel like it takes a lot out of that child's learning. There have been

times in the past that I was able to go to the school and sit down in the classroom,

and I felt like it did much better with me going by there than with him knowing

that I'm coming.

About 90% of the parents felt that the school should provide them with different

types of resources to promote student achievement. Most of the parents' responses were

supported by literature directed at empowering parents with resources such as

information booklets, trainings, and/or workshops to equip them with knowledge

(Sawyer, 2015). All of the parents felt that the school could provide them with some type

of resources to help them to assist their children.

Teacher Perceptions

Parent teacher meetings. For teachers and parents to collaborate effectively,

there is a need for clear two-way communication (Kirkbride, 2014). The teachers were

asked about the strategies that they found effective to convince parents to visit the school

to discuss their children's educational process. Communicating with parents through

meetings ranked the highest. Other suggestions included providing educational take-

home material and having quick conversations were mentioned.

T1 said, "Having individual parent meetings where the teacher calls them at times. Maybe during a meet and greet, serving food, and displaying children's work."

T2 commented:

For instance, monthly parent meetings. On the parent meeting flyers, I might say door prizes. It's almost like I have to give something to get their time from them. It actually helps and tends to get more parents to come out.

On the other hand, T4 expressed that she lets the parents stop by the classroom at any time to have quick conversations about their children's academic progress. Scheduling meeting times was not a necessity with her, as long as the parents wanted to help to improve student performance. Forty percent of the teachers mentioned that sending home educational materials was a reasonable strategy to get parents to come to the school. Communicating with parents can help teachers in their efforts to improve students' learning.

Telephone conversations. Just as parent-teacher meetings promoted two-way communication, the teachers mentioned the importance of making routine telephone conversations to reach out to parents and promote parental involvement (Sawyer, 2015). Many of the teachers indicated that telephone calls raised the parents' awareness of becoming involved with educational tasks. Specifically, T1, 2, 4, and 5 said that making telephone calls was how they reached out to parents. According to previous results, parents like to have telephone conversations with their children's teacher so that they can share their input (Sawyer, 2015). T3's response was different. She believed that encouraging parents to be classroom volunteers promoted parental involvement.

Parent-teacher conferences. The teachers identified parent-teacher conferences as a third form of communication that gave teachers and parents the opportunity to discuss any academic and behavioral concerns regarding the children. One form of school-based involvement is parent-teacher communication (Malone, 2015).

T2, who considered conferencing with parents significant, said, "Stay in close contact with the parents and the parents vice versa with the teacher, so they can know what's going on. The child can get help at home and at school. That's extremely important."

In addition to parents and teachers having a close relationship, T5 indicated that teachers and parents should work as a team. She said, "We are fighting for the same goal and that's to make sure the child succeeds. Not letting the child play the teacher against the parent or the parent against the teacher."

Parent-teacher conferences were one way of supporting communication between the school and parents.

Professional developments. Along with parent-teacher meetings, telephone conversations, and parent-teacher conferences, the teachers identified professional developments as another form of communication to promote parental involvement. The teachers were asked to describe the professional developments offered by the school. Of the five teachers, three noted that professional developments addressing ways to communicate effectively in parent-teacher conferences, telephone conversations, letters, and/or notes could assist parents with their children's education. As Sawyer (2015) mentioned, teachers can educate parents by providing workshops, trainings, and

webinars. Parents and teachers should be able to choose the topics of communication. For example, at the beginning of the school year, the school may want to focus on topics that parents are experiencing the most difficulty with. Having parents share their knowledge and ideas are ways for teachers to learn new information to promote student learning (Sawyer, 2015). However, if parents do not inform the school about their concerns, teachers will choose professional development topics that they feel will support student achievement. Professional developments can benefit teachers and parents. Teachers can learn from parents by asking questions during professional development activities.

Reward systems. To support community partnerships, some of the teachers suggested that stakeholders donate money to the school to implement reward systems for students. Several teachers specifically communicated that the money donations could be used to update and/or purchase technological devices and other rewards appropriate for students. T3 mentioned that reward systems would help to motivate students to do their best. In particular, T1, T2, and T4 noted that donors could help with the maintenance and purchase of such devices as computers and tablets.

The school also could use a form of academic socialization to discuss with stakeholders ways that the money could be used wisely. Academic socialization is a form of involvement that allows individuals to voice their concerns about the well-being of children (Malone, 2015). The teachers suggested that community stakeholders' financial donations could support student learning. They also stated that stakeholders should consider volunteering in the school.

T2 asserted, "Well, community partners can actually donate their time. They are just volunteers. They are not paid. They come to volunteer their time, and they do this during school hours."

T3 stated that going into the schools and helping out would be beneficial to the students. Volunteering is a type of school-based involvement, as reported in the literature (Wang & Sheikl-Khalil, 2014). The teachers viewed volunteering as a form of community partnership meant to support students with their learning endeavors.

Educational facilities. The teachers mentioned reward systems and volunteering as types of community partnerships. They also noted that community stakeholders could provide educational facilities to promote student learning**.**

T2 voiced her concern about reward systems, volunteering, and educational facilities as important ways to support students' educational practices:

Where I'm at, there's a local church that offer a safe haven for some of the local high school students, and they come. They do their homework and might play basketball. It varies. I think that's a wonderful thing for them to do. See if children have a safe haven a safe place to go, and they know the community cares by putting money into their school. That means their investing in me. Then those students tend to be more productive into society.

T4 agreed, noting that "the community needs to have an area where the students can go in and work on their homework assignments, and also they need to be involved with the school."

T1 stated that the students needed places to go to complete their homework, such as recreation rooms similar to library study rooms and/or gymnasiums. In particular, T1 added that old vacant schools in the city could be used to support students' educational tasks. The teachers recognized the importance of school-community partnerships.

The parents and the teachers identified and discussed interrelated forms of communication. The findings for Theme 3 showed that all participants used some form of communication: attending school conferences, helping at events, and calling the school. However, the teachers discussed significant ways that community partnerships could help to improve student learning. They indicated how reward systems such as donating money to support students' educational desires would be beneficial. Title 1 schools do not have the financial resources to upgrade computers, so donations from stakeholders in the community could help to meet this goal.

The teachers also noted that stakeholders could volunteer to tutor students as another way to support their learning. The teachers believed that if students knew that the community cared about their education, it would motivate them to do better in school. The teachers suggested that stakeholders could provide educational facilities so that students could have a safe place to study and or participate in extracurricular activities.

Only the teachers spoke about the benefits of community partnerships. The parents might not have been aware of the role that community partnerships could play in improving students' academic performance. The parents and the teachers needed to collaborate to address this gap in knowledge. All participants in the current study wanted the best for all students, so communicating effectively with one another was vital.

Summary of Results

Results showed that three components of Epstein's model (Epstein et al., 2009) appeared in the participants' responses to the interview questions. Analysis of the subthemes and emergent themes showed that the data overlapped with components of Epstein model of parental involvement: (a) positive home conditions, (b) active communication, (c) involvement at school, (d) home learning activities, (e) shared decision making within the school, and (f) participation in community partnerships. This particular finding was surprising because the model was used only to guide the teacher interview questions. Three themes emerged from the data analysis: parenting and learning at home, volunteering and decision making, and communicating and collaborating with the community.

Results indicated that that teachers' and parents' lack of common understanding of parental involvement was the main gap in practice. Poverty also played a role in the gap in practice with the parent participants. The data obtained from the parents' income and education levels were quite low. The data indicated that not all educational needs to improve their children's learning at home were being met. More than 90% of the parents said that they needed resources from the school to help with student learning at home. The students attend a Title 1 school, which is supported with government funds. Most students also received a free or reduced-price lunch. The parents in the school district did not have high earnings. Dealing with poverty is not part of the Epstein model, but it is a real situation in Tennessee.

The teachers' responses reflected their efforts to improve parental involvement based on their work experience and professional development trainings. Many of the teachers mentioned using the support of community stakeholders as reward systems to help to improve students' achievement by donating money, tutoring students, and providing educational facilities. The stakeholders' financial donations could provide the school and parents with extra resources to promote student learning. Stakeholders, teachers, and parents needed to communicate ways to become involved to improve student performance to close the gap in practice.

Section 3: The Project

The project was a white paper that centered on ways to implement a community outreach program. In this white paper, I highlight teachers' and parents' lack of common understanding of parental involvement. This problem regarding parental involvement was the foundation for the gap in practice that was the focus of the study that informed this project. The purpose and the focus of this project study white paper was to (a) inform members of the community about the issues involved in the lack of parental involvement, (b) assist with solving the problem, and (c) help parents and teachers to make decisions to improve student performance. Based on the data analysis, more than 90% of the parents indicated that they would like the school to send home more resources so that they could help their children with learning activities. The teachers were prepared to do their best to improve the level of parental involvement at the school. Development of a white paper that highlights a community outreach program has the highest chance to reach and involve the parents in this low-income area.

Teachers and parents will have to work together to understand the major role of parental involvement in student learning. The review of the literature helped to guide the development of this community outreach white paper. The purpose of this community outreach was to build community relationships among the stakeholders, teachers, and parents to better prepare students for the future. The goal was to share options so that parents, teachers, and community stakeholders could be more active in students' lives. This goal was specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely. A community outreach program was a realistic idea that would give the individuals in the area of the

school the opportunity to collaborate to improve student learning. The white paper, which centers around a community outreach program, is a convenient way to give the parents the opportunity to read it, analyze it, try it, and make appropriate decisions to change what they are doing to make progress with their children academically.

Rationale

The problem targeted in the project study was teachers' and parents' lack of common understanding of parental involvement, which was the gap in practice that I filled with this study. Previous researchers have highlighted parental involvement as a positive factor in children's academic performance (Albritton, Angley, Grandelski, Hansen, & Kershaw, 2014; Mayo & Siraj, 2015; Nicholson et al., 2013; Stacer & Perrucci, 2013). The use of early parental involvement techniques, such as working with children to develop their language and communication skills, can have a positive influence on the achievement of children from disadvantaged families (Nicholson et al., 2013). According to Sawyer (2015), teachers should learn about new cultures and invite parents and guardians into the school as partners who can assume leadership roles. This face-to-face interaction might help parents and teachers to understand different aspects of parental involvement that can improve students' learning (Sawyer, 2015).

As previously mentioned, more than 90% of the parents wanted the school to send home more resources. Stefanski, Valli, and Jacobson (2016) suggested that two-way communication between parents and school personnel could ease access to resources. Financial donations could be used to obtain the resources that teachers need to communicate with parents, such as flyers, homework activities, and weekly calendars. In

addition, access to other resources, such as technological devices, could assist with student learning.

The Title 1 school that was the focus of this study is located in a low-SES area. The students are eligible to receive a free or reduced-price lunch. The average annual income in the area is below $30,000. Most of the parents completed only high school and have had little to no extended professional work experience. Parents who live in low-SES areas may need guidance on ways to access resources to help their children to succeed academically (Masten, Fiat, Labella, & Strack, 2016).

Parents and families in low-income areas may be struggling financially because they are single parents, adolescent parents, or homeless parents. There are different forms of poverty. Payne (2005) defined generational poverty that extends for two generations or more, whereas situational poverty, which covers a shorter time, is caused by situations such as death, illness, or divorce. To survive living in poverty, individuals have to be able to read situations, build relationships, and become problem solvers (Payne, 2005). Parents and teachers who reach a common understanding of parental involvement could benefit students by offering them help to find resources to support their learning.

Three themes emerged from the study: parenting and learning at home, volunteering and decision making, and communicating and collaborating with the community. Results also identified some components of Epstein's model of parental involvement (Epstein et al., 2009): (a) positive home conditions, (b) active communication, (c) involvement at school, (d) home learning activities, (e) shared decision making within the school, and (f) participation in community partnerships. The

findings informed the project study, a community outreach paper focused on improving

students' academic achievement by increasing levels of parental involvement and

supporting collaboration with teachers, principals, health care providers, businesses, and

community organizations.

Recent research has indicated that school-community partnerships are successful

for students and their families (Stefanski et al., 2016). Teachers and principals, the major

stakeholders in the school setting, need resources such as textbooks and instructional

tools to ensure that quality instruction occurs daily in the classroom. Parents need to

engage in effective involvement techniques with their children at home (Hashmi &

Akhter, 2013). In addition, health care providers need community-based resources such

as food banks and child care to assist adolescent parents (Thompson, 2009).

Review of Literature

The overall purpose of this literature review was to illustrate how a white paper

could be used by and shared with and among individuals and organizations. In the

literature review, I highlighted community outreach as a framework to help stakeholders

to work together.

White Papers

History of a white paper. The term *white paper* used to refer to a government

report to demonstrate that the document was authoritative and valid in content

(Sakamuro, Stolley, & Hyde, 2010). Sakamuro et al. (2010) recommended that

individuals prepare white papers to offer solutions to problems or to argue positions to

different audiences. Graham (2010) stated that white papers were introduced in the 20th

century in Great Britain. Similarly, Willerton (2005) noted that "some sources that exhibit the history of a white paper say that the document derived in England, but it was intended to illustrate information on governmental policy" (p. 1). For example, a well-known historic white paper is the British White Paper of 1922 (Willerton, 2005).

White papers have been referred to as "(a) marketing requirement documents in the 1970s, (b) technical documents that discussed steps in detail in the 1980s, and (c) business decision-makers in the 1990s" (Stelzner, 2007, p. 11). In this century, the use of white papers has increased. A Google search on white papers in 2001 generated more than one million replies, and a second search in 2006 resulted in 329 million responses (Stelzner, 2007). Sakamuro et al. (2010) stated, "Today white papers have become popular marketing tools for corporations specifically on the World Wide Web since people now use the internet often" (p. 1).

Definition of a white paper. Gordon and Graham (2003) indicated that within a business environment,

> A white paper is a pre-sales document aimed at potential customers who have not yet make up their minds to buy a certain product or back a certain technology, and it is also a piece of marketing collateral whose form and content lies somewhere between a glossy brochure and a technical manual. (p. 10)

In contrast, Stelzner (2007) noted that white papers are persuasive documents that explain and attempt to solve problems and that they tie main points and educational approaches into messages found in brochures. Gordon and Graham (2003) believed that white papers are similar to brochures. Likewise, Kantor (2010) and Stelzner agreed that

white papers present problems and suggest ways to resolve the issues. White papers

spotlight issues in certain areas and suggest solutions (Kantor, 2010).

Several researchers have provided definitions of a white paper. Sakamuro et al.

(2016) defined a white paper as a unique report that is specific in purpose, audience, and

organization. In contrast, Bainomugisha (2017) viewed a white paper as a type of

research paper, and Srikanth (2002) considered a white paper a standard marketing tool.

Purpose of a white paper. According to Kantor (2010), white papers provide

executives with valuable information. Sakamuro et al. (2010) noted that the purpose of a

white paper is to advertise a position and suggest a particular solution to solve the issue.

A white paper should reflect the readers' interest, not the writer's point of view

(Sakamuro et al., 2010). White papers are written for different purposes and different

target audiences. Graham and Gordon (2003) identified the purpose of a white paper as

advertising the products that companies wish to sell in the marketplace. Stelzner (2007)

mentioned the following purposes of a white paper: (a) help individuals to make

decisions, (b) suggest solutions to problems, (c) help organizations with marketing

defenses, (d) influence target groups, and (e) be a persuasive marketing tool.

White papers also have been used for educational purposes. In particular, Stelzner

(2007) indicated that "the educational value of a white paper can be used not only to

inform potential customers, but also many be leveraged to train new employees" (p. 7).

Decision makers depend on white papers when seeking solutions to solve problems

(Stelzner, 2007). Stelzner as well as Graham and Gordon (2003) agreed that white papers

educate individuals and the sales force. With attention to the educational purposes of a white paper, some are written to influence policy (Bainomugisha, 2017).

Creating a white paper. White papers can take different formats. Sakamuro et al. (2010) described the following structure of a white paper: It should hold (a) an introduction/a summary, (b) background/problem, (c) solution, (d) advertisement, (e) conclusion, and (f) works cited. Graham and Gordon (2003) focused on the format and content of a white paper: length, tone, illustrations, production, distribution, time to prepare, and cost to prepare. According to Srikanth (2002), a white paper should contain a problem, technology component, description of how technology works, benefits of product, visual appeal, solution, and a summary.

A major component of a white paper is to explain the problem (Sakamuro et al 2010; Srikanth, 2002; Stelzner, 2007). The background knowledge will help readers to understand the problem in detail. According to Stelzner (2007), White Paper Source sent a survey to several hundred writers to set standards for the components of a white paper. Seven major responses were collected from the survey: Individuals should (a) state the problem or challenge, (b) produce five to 12 pages, (c) present the research topic, (d) avoid selling, (e) describe target benefits, (f) use meaningful information, and (g) avoid humor (Stelzner, 2007). Regarding the length of a white paper, Willerton (2005) proposed that it should be about 10 to 12 pages, whereas Kantor (2010) mentioned that white papers should be six to eight pages in length. The literature has shown that writers have to judge how long they want or need their white papers to be (Kantor, 2010; Stelzner, 2007; Willerton, 2005). By reading white papers prepared by different authors,

readers can gain insight into their views and purposes, as well as obtain a sense of how to write their own white papers.

Outreach

Purpose of community outreach. A community outreach will target parents, teachers, and community stakeholders to help to increase students' academic achievement. There are many different types of community outreaches. Kladifko (2013) indicated that schools belong to the community. He pointed out that community members should be able to use schools for functions so that they can understand what is happening in the school setting that is making a positive difference for students. Parents, teachers, and stakeholders must understand the others' perceptions of parental involvement in order for students to benefit.

According to Johnsen and Bele (2013), collaboration between parents and teachers is reached when the communication power between the two parties is observed. The school does not own the communication power; rather, the power is held by the parties that need to communicate (Johnsen & Bele, 2013). In this situation, the parents, teachers, and stakeholders are the main focus of the efforts to help students to improve academically.

Active outreach for parents, school staff, and community members will increase their knowledge, skills, and focus to help students to become better learners (Reece, Staudt, & Ogle, 2013; Stacer & Perrucci, 2013; Stefanski et al., 2016). Effective communication is the impetus that can lead to a positive working relationship among parents, school staff, and community members (Johnsen & Bele, 2013; Kladifko, 2013;

Mayo & Siraj, 2015). Stacer and Perrucci (2013) found that minority parents were less involved than European American parents in their children's schools. They also found that parents who had higher levels of school outreach had more involvement in their children's schools. The quantitative study used a sample of 12,426 parents and guardians of students in Kindergarten to Grade 12, and the data were collected from the Parent and Family Involvement Survey (Stacer & Perrucci, 2013).

Stakeholders in community outreaches. According to Ramachandra and Mansor (2014), stakeholders have invested in the performance and academic success of students. Stakeholders can be students, administrators, faculty, community, and organizations (Ramachandra & Mansor, 2014). Taking a stakeholder approach can help to encourage a sense of ownership of a community engagement program (Ramachandra & Mansor, 2014). A community outreach initiative could be similar to a community engagement program. Community outreach provides services to individuals who may not have access to the services on their own, whereas a community engagement program involves collaboration requiring the use of strategies and methods by individuals or partnerships to resolve issues.

Kladifko (2013) asserted that principals should reach out to community members to let them know their schools' needs. Inviting stakeholders into the school setting also could help to obtain the resources needed to support students' academic achievement (Kladifko, 2013). School-community partnerships are the most effective if all parties collaborate to reach a common goal, which is improved academic performance. Successful relationships happen when emotional deposits are made to clients or

employees, emotional withdrawals are avoided, and clients or employees are respected
(Payne, 2008).

Organizations bring different perspectives and ideas to assist groups. According
to Payne (2008), organizations build relationships through support systems by caring
about individuals, promoting achievement, being role models, and encouraging
successful behaviors for the organizations. Payne (1996) indicated that support systems
are simply networks of relationships. Specifically, the main way to help students in
poverty is to build relationships with them (Payne, 1996). It may take time to build the
relationships, but time is the force that magnifies those simple daily disciplines into
massive success (Olson, 2013). As a community, citizens could benefit if they worked
collaboratively.

Description and Goals

The major goal of this project was to provide stakeholders, that is, parents,
teachers, community partners, and organizations, with valid information about the current
misunderstanding of parental involvement. The white paper, which is the outcome of this
project, offers possible strategies to create a community outreach that will help all
stakeholders to improve students' learning. The local problem is that parents and teachers
have different perceptions of parental involvement to assist with student learning.
Collaboration between parents and teachers will help to increase students' academic
performance (Stacer & Perrucci, 2012).

To accomplish the goals of the project, all stakeholders need to try to listen to and
respect all other views so that they can work together effectively. Parents and teachers are

included as stakeholders because both parties were in the study. The school is included because the administration directs and supports teachers in general. Community partnerships are included because they provide schools with resources to help to improve students' academic success. Above all, communication is key to making decisions. Effective communication and trust are two elements that support school-community collaboration (Kladifko, 2013).

Implementation

Potential Resources and Existing Support

I had a prior conversation with the principal of the elementary school to discuss a plan to present my results to the stakeholders (i.e., teachers, parents, and community organizations) at a faculty meeting. The students will inform their parents about the presentation by taking home a flyer. I will call and take a flyer advertising the event to the community organizations. The principal will inform faculty and staff of the presentation date. The principal and I identified several opportunities to present this white paper. The school day for the faculty and staff typically lasts from 8:15 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. All schools in the district have meetings to communicate information to faculty and to present professional developments. The faculty meetings usually start at 3:30 p.m. because the teachers have afterschool duty. The late time is reasonable because some parents pick up their children from the school. They can just come inside the school to attend the presentation. Organizations will be able to attend because the presentation will be held at the end of a workday. The research will be presented in the media room, which

consists of smart boards, computers, speakers, tables and chairs, and stands. I will need these resources to support my presentation completely.

Potential Barriers

The advantage of presenting my findings and the project study at the elementary school during a faculty meeting is that teachers attend these meetings every week. However, one barrier could be that some teachers may have to attend mandatory training provided by the district at a different location. Another challenge could be that some parents may work late shifts and miss the presentation. The third challenge could be that some community organizations may not have representatives available to attend at the designated time.

Implementation and Timetable

I plan to present my findings and the white paper to faculty and staff during the 2019 fall semester, which is a good time because it will give the stakeholders the opportunity to begin working together at the beginning of the school year. The school will have the opportunity to schedule a meeting with stakeholders in the community. The stakeholders who are going to be a part of the solution to the problem should be present at the meeting. The companies or organizations may need time to plan to attend the meetings. I also will let the stakeholders know that I can take part in the collaborations once I know the times and locations.

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Roles and Responsibilities

</div>

I am responsible for discussing the findings and presenting the project study to faculty and staff in a meeting at the elementary school. I will then take questions from the

audience. Next, I will present white paper, which is the project study. I will discuss the

major parts of the white paper and explain their importance to the audience. I will

conclude with a Q&A session to clarity anything in the presentation that might not have

been understood. The role of the school is to ensure that parents, staff, and organizations

know the date of the event. The school also will be responsible for making sure the room

for the event be large enough to hold all stakeholders and that the equipment (i.e., a

working computer with Internet service and a projector) will be set up for me.

Project Evaluation

The stakeholders (i.e., teachers, parents, and community partners) will interpret

my findings and the presentation in their own ways. The stakeholders' evaluations of the

information may lead to all parties wanting to come together to work on a plan. They also

could state their opinions about the project, reasons for supporting it, and offer solutions.

Personal and professional changes are different: Personal change refers to feelings,

intentions, and thoughts about self, whereas professional change refers to the skills,

techniques, and processes that individuals use at work (Patton, 2002).

The audience will be asked to evaluate the presentation by completing a short

survey of five questions with multiple-choice and open-ended responses (see Appendix

H). The paper survey will be administered following the presentation to determine if it

was meaningful to the audience. The evaluation also will help me to develop other

educational workshops or presentations. In addition, the evaluation will give the

stakeholders the opportunity to identify resources that they feel will benefit the students'

education. Projects should revolve around teachers focusing on their own practices,

educators collaborating with schools and communities, and researchers assisting with issues in educational settings (Creswell, 2012). The results of the survey will highlight the stakeholders' points of view pertaining to my findings and the project. The results may convince the stakeholders to meet to discuss future interests in supporting students. The results also could give be the impetus for me to study other educational topics that are of interest to stakeholders, teachers, and parents.

Implications for Social Change

Local Stakeholders

This study highlighted the different perceptions held by teachers and parents of parental involvement in an elementary school setting. The stakeholders were parents, teachers, community partners, and organizations. Stakeholders assist students with their educational journey. Positive and effective communication among these stakeholders will help students to be successful academically. To increase the levels of parental involvement, the stakeholders will have to work collaboratively to address and analyze misconceptions about parental involvement. This is the goal of the white paper.

Far-Reaching Implications

The different perceptions of parents and teachers about parental involvement may present problems to students. Many schools have problems reaching their goal of having students meet expectations on benchmarks, state testing, and/or district assessments. Some of these problems may be the result of a lack of understanding of (a) ways that parents can assist students at home, (b) effective strategies to communicate information to parents to help students, and (c) methods that could be used by teachers to explain

skills or content to students at school, as well as (d) the unavailability of funds from community stakeholders to educate students. The need to investigate the ways that schools are operated and funded on a higher level also is essential. The state department and school district are both responsible for students' state test scores. To see positive social change at a higher level, the state department and the school district may have to invest more human capital into schools to provide parental involvement professional developments for teachers. The school district also might consider hiring presenters to educate parents on ways that they can assist with their children academic needs. The white paper will highlight an emphasis on community outreach that will assist stakeholders to work collaboratively to improve student learning. The white paper also will inform stakeholders of the findings and emphasize the ways that collaboration will enhance knowledge and pedagogical practices.

This qualitative study focused on parents' and teachers' perceptions of parental involvement. I conducted interviews with five parents from a low-SES area and 10 teachers from a Title 1 school at local libraries around the city. Epstein's model of parental involvement (Epstein et al., 2009) and the TPB were the framework used to examine the perceptions of the teachers and the parents about parental involvement. The findings will help parents and teachers to gain a better understanding of the others' perceptions. In particular, the findings will facilitate discussions about ways to promote efficient and effective practices to promote student learning. More research may be needed to explain the topic in more depth.

The white paper will inform stakeholders of the problem, provide research and factual generalizations about the topic, promote outreach as the best to reach the community, and present an action plan. The goal of the white paper is to help stakeholders to work collaboratively to make changes to their perceptions of parental involvement in an effort to ensure more academic success for students. In Section 4, I discuss the strengths and limitations of the study; present my reflections as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer; and offer suggestions for further research.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

In this section, I discuss the strengths and limitations of the project, offer recommendations for alternative approaches, showcase scholarship, explain the project development and evaluation, and demonstrate leadership and change. I also reflect on the importance of the work, along with the implications, application, and direction for future research. I am an advocate for improving students' achievement. This study has motivated me as an educator to work harder to help students to become high achievers with the support of teachers, parents, and stakeholders.

Project Strengths and Limitations

The project displays strengths in educating stakeholders about the problem that was studied. The stakeholders are parents, teachers, community partners, and organizations. The content of the study was researched with fidelity using peer-reviewed articles. The generalizations stated in the project also were written with validity. The project was centered on a community outreach program that would see all stakeholders working collaboratively to support students' academic achievement. Communication among the stakeholders will ensure the success of this community outreach project.

Another strength of the project is the implementation of an action plan to get the stakeholders to collaborate in a systematic way. The three parts of the action plan are administration, advocation, and application. The administration component addresses the ways that school administration will communicate educational topics with all stakeholders by involving them in discussions. During the advocation process, the stakeholders will share their opinions and perspectives about problems that may be

hindering students' academic progress. The stakeholders will have the opportunity to share ideas about what they can do to help to solve the problems. The application segment revolves around the research findings. The stakeholders will have the chance to communicate with each other to see what resources students need to become better learners.

The project has several limitations. The first limitation is that the project is a white paper, not a professional development program. The white paper will be printed and given to the stakeholders to read, analyze, and discuss. In a white paper, the information is printed to present the problem, highlight the findings, and share strategies to resolve the problem. A professional development program educates the stakeholders about the ways that different strategies could be used to solve the problem. This would give the stakeholders background knowledge about a variety of practices to review.

The second limitation of the project is that it only presents one solution to the problem that was studied. The need to create a community outreach program was the only option documented in the project to help to increase student achievement. I believe that a second choice should be considered if the community outreach program does not work with the stakeholders. Some individuals like choices instead of being told what to do to complete a task. The stakeholders will have different strengths and weaknesses in their skills and daily duties.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

I used a qualitative approach to obtain the data. I followed an exploratory, phenomenological design to gain a better understanding of the participants' lived

experiences of parental involvement. A phenomenologist's main goal is to analyze the participants' lived experiences in detail (Van Manen, 1990). Qualitative studies are conducted to address research problems by exploring the participants' views and breaking down the data to find descriptions and themes (Creswell, 2012). An alternative option would have been to use a quantitative approach; however, a quantitative approach focuses on the ways that trends and explanations need to be examined. This approach would not have been a good fit because the focus of my study was to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' thoughts, views, and lived experiences of parental involvement. A qualitative research approach was appropriate to address this problem.

The target population of 25 teachers and 400 parents came from one elementary school. I used purposeful sampling to understand the perceptions of 10 parents and five teacher about parental involvement. Purposeful sampling reveals useful information that can help individuals to learn about the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2012). The sample could have been generated from target populations from two different school settings. This strategy would have facilitated a comparison, which was not a factor in the current study. Making this change also would have necessitated more time to collect the data. The main objective of the study was to focus on the central problem at a single school to help to improve students' academic achievement. The decision to choose one study site was productive because the data collection process was lengthy, the interview questions were open ended, and the participants had opportunities to share their lived experiences in detail.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

As I reflect on my experience as a doctoral student at Walden University, I believe that scholarship means learning how to discover, analyze, synthesize, and increase one's critical-thinking skills to address a problem or a situation. To be a productive scholar, I had to research copious literature to understand the problem that I wanted to study. I had to locate background information about the problem from credible resources, then I had to research several data collection and analysis protocols to find ones that met the needs of my study.

Scholarship also involves respecting the sources used in studies. Scholars learn from reading and analyzing extant literature how to protect their participants from harm. As scholars, telling the truth and having a sense of integrity are needed to complete the research and produce accurate findings. Scholarship is displayed when all of these generalizations are used with consistency and validity.

The project that I developed to inform the stakeholders, parents, and school about the issue of parental involvement was a white paper. In the white paper, I provide valid findings about the topic and explain why a community outreach program would be a good solution to assist with the problem. The white paper also includes an action plan to implement an effective community outreach program as well as the project evaluation, which serves as a critical component. I will present the white paper to the stakeholders. I will then ask them to complete a survey to evaluate the presentation and determine if the information was delivered in a high-quality format. It is important that the stakeholders, namely, parents, teachers, community members, and organizations, understand the

information in the white paper to move forward with development of a community outreach program. The goal is for the stakeholders to work collaboratively to improve student learning

Leadership and change are essential in educational research. For example, parents and teachers served as the participants in the study to understand the different perceptions of parental involvement; however, for the project study, community stakeholders, parents, and teachers will work collaboratively to create a community outreach program. I made this shift because each party's goal is to help improve students' academic achievement. I changed the leadership role from the parents and teachers to add stakeholders such as community members and organizations. All the stakeholders will share the leadership role to change the way that students are educated. Giving all stakeholders an equal opportunity will help to create the practices necessary to better educate students.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

I conducted copious research to complete this study. I had to read a massive number of peer-reviewed articles to understand the topic and glean information relevant to the problem. I also spent time synthesizing information from credible resources and analyzing the participants' interview transcriptions. Synthesizing information is much more arduous than comparing and contrasting information because it involves seeking a deeper understanding. I had to employ my critical-thinking skills to maneuver my way through several components of the doctoral study process to ensure that I used the sources of information correctly.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

This project study can be used to inform stakeholders, that is, parents, teachers, community members, and organizations, about parental involvement. The goal of this white paper was to encourage stakeholders to work collaboratively to improve students' academic achievement. If the groups collaborate to communicate their ideas successfully, development of a community outreach program would provide a platform targeting improvements in students' academic achievement. A three-step action plan of administration, advocation, and application detailed how to create a successful community outreach program.

Future research could come from different perspectives based on the findings and the project study. A quantitative approach could be used if trends, variables, comparisons of large groups, or the collection of numeric data is the focus. A larger sample might be necessary if the focus of a future study required a more diverse sample of men and women. The sample in the current study comprised only female parents and teachers. A quantitative approach might require the use of statistics to display the data. In the current study, a qualitative approach allowed me to provide rich details of the participants' lived experiences of parental involvement.

Conclusion

I conducted this qualitative study to understand the perceptions of parents and teachers about parental involvement. I interviewed five teachers and 10 parents from one school to obtain detailed responses about the research problem. The results will provide parents, teachers, and other stakeholders with collaborative strategies to increase

students' learning. The results presented ways to improve students' academic achievement.

I selected a white paper as the project study to inform stakeholders about the problem, provide research about the issue, justify why a community outreach program was chosen to assist with the problem, and promote an action plan to solve the problem. In Section 4, I highlighted strengths, limitations, project development and evaluations, implications, applications, and directions for future research in detail. Future researchers could employ a quantitative research approach; a mixed method approach also might be effective to convey the lived experiences of the participants and compare variables and trends.

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Appendix A: The Project

Improving Student Achievement: A Collaborative Effort

A White Paper by Sebrina R. Patton

The goals of this white paper are to

➢ Highlight a lack of parental involvement as an issue derived from parents' and teachers' perceptions.

➢ Inform stakeholders such as parents, teachers, community partners, and organizations about research findings of a study that identified parents' and teachers' perceptions of parental involvement,

➢ Persuade stakeholders to work together collaboratively within a community outreach to improve student achievement and pedagogical practices.

Introduction

This white paper provides an overview of an educational issue, namely, the lack of parental involvement because parents and teachers do not have the same understanding of this topic. In addition, the paper will illustrate the results from a local study of parents' and teachers' perceptions of parental involvement. The paper also addresses ways that stakeholders can work together in a community outreach to help to increase student performance.

The PROBLEM

Parental involvement is a state and national educational issue. Parents and teachers do not have the same understanding of parental involvement. Hayes (2011) stated that "parental involvement as parental attitudes and behaviors that are expressed within

multiple domains to promote student achievement outcomes" (p. 1). According to Young, Austin, and Growe (2013), parental involvement impacts children's learning in positive ways.

Different Forms of Parental Involvement

1. School-based parental involvement, such as attending parent-teacher conferences, volunteering, fundraising, and helping in the classrooms (Bramesfeld et al., 2013; Wang & Khalil, 2014).
2. Home-based parental involvement consists of homework time, leisure time, and monitoring of school tasks (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014).

In addition, Sawyer (2015) noted, "Parental involvement in a child's educational setting can occur in a variety of school-related contexts, including

helping with homework and supporting academic developments" (p. 175).

For decades, education researchers and policymakers have said that parental involvement leads to higher academic outcomes for students (Stacer & Perrucci, 2013).

Parental Involvement at a Local School & Why It Matters

MER Elementary, a pseudonym, is a Title 1 school located in a low-SES area in one of the largest school districts in Tennessee. Most of the students are eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program. Many of the parents and guardians of the students are single parents and do not make over $30,000 a year. An estimated 80% of the schools in this area are provided with Title 1 funds, which are the largest federal funded educational programs.

MER Elementary in this region is having problems meeting school performance measures.

Recent year data have shown that MER is not meeting state expectations on the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment. This year, the MER composite school score displays a level for the 2016-2017 test results. The highest score that a school can receive is 5 (meeting expectations to the fullest). The school needs help to improve student achievement. Teachers, parents, and community outreach participants and others can play an important role in this endeavor.

The teachers are doing their best to educate the students on a daily basis. The students attend school 5 days a week from 8:15 until 3:15. The teachers are provided with professional development training to gain more strategies and knowledge to ensure that their students are successful academically. On the other hand, some parents help their children at home, but some do not. The children who do not receive help at home pose a problem because it takes assistance from teachers and parents to increase student learning. Parents should be a part of their children's education right from the beginning (Harris, 2013).

Parents and teachers must work collaboratively to understand each other's views and positions on parental involvement so that the students can grow in their educational efforts. Communication is the key to assist both parties with their issues. Gaining an understanding of the importance of parental involvement will result in increased academic performance.

The goal at all schools is for students to meet the state expectations or score above and/or beyond.

The support of teachers and parents will make a difference in children's efforts to learn new concepts and skills. If teachers and parents work collaboratively, students will have a positive educational impact (Baker, Wise, Kelley, & Skiba, 2016).

To support teachers and the parents, community members, businesses, and others could join together as

stakeholders to play an important role in this endeavor in many ways. First, a community outreach can be put in motion to see how parents, community members, and the school can assist as a group. The three groups have to work collaboratively to be effective in ensuring students' progress. New instructional practices and strategies have to be discussed in detail to meet all of the learners' needs and obtain a better success rate of the standards taught daily. Also, implementing more efficient ways to communicate the information to the students can bring effective results. Adding more resources and support systems means providing emotional, mental, and relationship role model, and physical resources (Payne, 2008).

For example, adding more multimedia resources to lesson delivery may help to keep the students motivated to learn and retain information. Smartboards, promethean boards, "elmo" projectors, laptops, and/or tablets may increase students' attention span so that they want to learn more and do more in the academic setting. Students of this generation love technology.
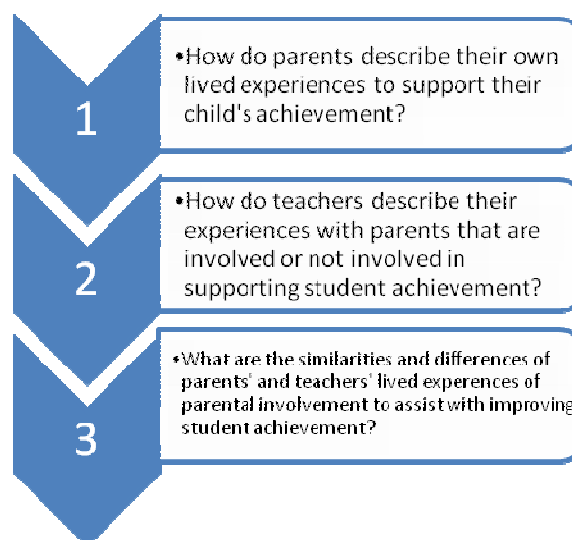
Synopsis of a Study at This Local School and Why Request More Parental Involvement and Help

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate parents' perceptions of their own personal involvement and teachers' perceptions of parental involvement. If these two groups collaborate effectively, they can improve student achievement. The feedback from the two groups assisted with an understanding of how and why they felt

certain ways about parental involvement. The findings were compiled and studied to gain clarity of the issue of the lack of parental involvement.

The lack of parental involvement has been researched massively (Wamala, Kizitok, & Jjemba, 2013). Many theories have been used to study parental involvement. In this particular study, Epstein's model and the theory of planned behavior (TPB) frameworks were used to guide the study and identify ways to improve student achievement at school and in the home.

Three Major Research Questions

1 •How do parents describe their own lived experiences to support their child's achievement?

2 •How do teachers describe their experiences with parents that are involved or not involved in supporting student achievement?

3 •What are the similarities and differences of parents' and teachers' lived experences of parental involvement to assist with improving student achievement?

Methodology

A qualitative study was designed and completed to answer the three research questions. The target population consisted of 25 teachers and 400 parents. I used purposeful sampling as a strategy to select 10 parents and five teachers who volunteered to join the study. Ten parents ages 18 to 47 years with high

school diplomas to postcollege degrees were interviewed. Five teachers with 11 or more years of teaching experience also were interviewed.

A short demographic survey was given to the parent and teacher participants right before they were interviewed. An interview protocol was used to direct the interview questions. Open-ended interview questions based on the TPB were created for the parents to answer. The components of the TPB are based on attitudes and beliefs, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral controls. In contrast, the teachers answered open-ended questions based on Epstein's model of parental involvement. The model has six types of parental involvement techniques:

1) positive home conditions
2) active communication
3) involvement at school
4) home learning activities
5) shared decision making
6) community partnership

Data Analysis

The recorded interview responses were transcribed and reviewed to ensure accuracy. Once that was completed, Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and matrixes were prepared to organize, sort, and code the information for themes; the codes lined up with the frameworks used in the study. I used member checking to ensure credibility. The interviewees were contacted to receive a copy of their responses from the interview. I had a

> "Parental Involvement means that I am available to my child for help. I am active as I can be. I am available to for homework or if she has any projects."

teacher colleague read and analyze the transcriptions and themes to gain an understanding of the study without any identifiers.

Results

Three themes emerged from the analysis of the transcriptions: parenting and learning at home, volunteering and decision making, and communicating and collaborating with the community. The themes aligned with the parent interview responses and the research questions. The interview questions were developed to gain information about the participants' lived experiences pertaining to parental involvement.

Theme 1: Parenting and Learning at Home

Theme 1 spotlighted students who were assisted with homework by parents and showed how the guardians had several lived experiences with parental involvement. Several interviewees gave similar responses about assisting their children with homework, helping their children with prior knowledge, teachers' perception of parental engagement, and a distraction-free work area, all of which identified the parents' and teachers' perceptions. Both sets of responses revealed that teachers and parents had already had several experiences with parental involvement. Several interviewees gave many similar responses on assisting their children with homework endeavors.

Parents and teachers were asked who was responsible for the students' education. Of 10 parents, 60% agreed that parents are solely responsible for their children's education. The other 40% said that the parents and teachers are responsible. A couple of parents expressed their feelings pertaining to this issue at hand.

> "Parents are responsible for educating their children. It's not the child's responsibility. They did not ask to come here and we as parents need to step up and do what we have to do for our children. That's part of our daily duty is to take care of our children and education is a big percent of raising a child."

The other 40% of the parents believed that they and the teachers are responsible for educating the students. Most of the teachers felt that parental involvement meant that parents assisted their children with homework. The teachers pointed out that how much time was spent helping the students at home with homework. The findings revealed that teachers and parents should work more closely to communicate on this issue.

Theme 2: Volunteering and Decision Making

This theme was derived from the coding of the words and experiences expressed by the parents and teachers. Both parents and teachers volunteered wand shared examples about how they worked to improve student learning. They made

wise decisions along the way to make sure that students were working toward progress. Parent subthemes of volunteering, helping their children with education, participation barriers with parent, and confidence toward education assisted with creating Theme 2.

All 10 parents admitted to volunteering in some type of way at their children's school. Participation ranged from volunteering at school functions to attending parent-teacher meetings and/or conferences. The parents agreed that volunteering and decision making were a priority. The parents believed that having a voice in the school mattered in assisting their children with academics. The teacher subthemes were learning groups, differentiated activities, and engaging resources that supported the decision-making components.

One teacher said, "Because students have different styles of learning, I incorporate activities that will be differentiated according to the needs of that particular child. I try as much as possible to touch bases one on one with each child at least each day in my classroom."

Teachers believed that making the right decisions on how to teach students played an important role in the education process. The teachers sought various ideas to ensure that students were learning in different ways and with a variety of resources.

Theme 3: Communicating and Collaborating

All parent interviewees believed that communicating and collaborating with the school was a necessity. Each participant showed a form of active engagement with their school to support their children's educational journeys. The parents did mention a problem with the school: They wanted the school to send home more educational resources to help them to teach their children skills and concepts.

> "I think schools should make curriculum guides available to parents. I don't see why that is something that is not given during registration. Why not give out curriculum guides so that we can see what the kids are required to know each year. That would be something to benefit parents and you could just follow along every 9 weeks. You will know what the kid is learning."

On the other hand, the teacher interviewees spoke about the ways that reward systems sponsored by stakeholders could help to improve student achievement. In addition, the teachers said that it would be a good idea for the stakeholders to come to the school to volunteer as tutors. In addition, the teachers mentioned that stakeholders could provide educational facilities for students to do their homework after school. The teachers thought that if the students had a feeling that the community cared about their future, the students would perform at their best at school.

Summary of Findings

Three elements of Epstein's model from 2009 were evident in the participants' answers to the interview questions. I recognized this after analyzing the subthemes and emergent themes. The data overlapped with Epstein's model of parental involvement. This was interesting because Epstein's model was used only to guide the teachers' interview questions, not those of the parents. A second important finding is that the teachers' and parents' lack of a common understanding of parental involvement was the major gap of importance.

Recommendation for Action

Based on the findings, the recommendation proposed in this white paper is that parents and teachers need to work more closely to improve student achievement. Parents, teachers, and community stakeholders are going to have to work collaboratively and effectively. This can be done through a community outreach, a platform that they all can use to make decisions about students' education.

Stakeholders could attend, listen to the important topics, agree to disagree, and end the sessions with efficient strategies to assist with improving student achievement. The suggested action plan is formatted into three components:

administration, advocation, and application.

Administration

The first recommendation refers to the administration staff at the school. The principal, assistant principal, and coaches all have to communicate the problem of parent and teacher misunderstandings of parental involvement to the teachers. This will open the door to invite teachers to support the process of helping parents to understand skills and concepts accurately to assist with improving student achievement.

Advocation

The second recommendation is meant to give educational advocates a voice to speak their truths and ideas about how to increase student achievement. Parents, teachers, and community stakeholders will have an opportunity to discuss parental involvement issues that they do not have a common understanding about.

Two groups can be created to fulfill this obligation: (a) A school staff group could help by presenting professional developments geared toward helping parents to assist with their children's education, and (b) an outreach group comprising parents, stakeholders, and school leaders could discuss topics and give each other feedback about educational tasks, goals, and practices.

Application

The third recommendation is focused on the findings of the study. The stakeholders could use the findings as a platform to discuss parents' and teachers' misunderstandings of parental involvement. All parties will be able to have direct conversation about the topic to make proper decisions about support systems and the type of resources that community members can provide or volunteer to do to assist with student learning.

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPROVING PARENT AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVMENT

Administration

- Ensure that the principal lead and support collaboration efforts for the school
- Invite school staff, parents, and stakeholders to be a part of the group
- Communicate educational topics to discuss
- Provide feedback and suggestions about effective practices

Advocation

- Stakeholders speak in favor of their beliefs about education
- Two committees will serve as advocates for the stakeholders' forum
- A school staff committee can provide services such as professional development training and/or Q&A sessions
- Community outreach committee can discuss viewpoints on how to increase

student performance with solutions and resources.

Application

- Research findings are revisited to assist with improving student achievement
- Stakeholders discuss ways to prioritize suggested solutions to parent and teacher misunderstandings of parental involvement
- Pedagogical practices that will be focused and implemented in the classroom to increase student learning
- New forms of communication are reviewed to resolve misunderstandings about educating students
- Effective strategies and teaching methods are targeted and reported on so that the students can show growth in their academics

Conclusion

The white paper focuses on the different perceptions of parents and teachers toward parental involvement. Most importantly, the paper spotlights how parents, teachers, and stakeholders can work collaboratively.

An action plan demonstrating three components (administration, advocation, and application) is recommended to increase student performance. The admin team at the school will lead the professional learning sessions. Invitations will be given to teachers who are interested.

Two different practices committees will serve as advocates by discussing their points of view about educational practices. A school staff and community

outreach committee will be formed to ensure that all stakeholders are invited. The findings will be applied to the discussions to see if further research is needed for clarity.

Appendix B: Parent Demographic Survey

1. Gender:

    _Male

    _Female

    _Transgender

    _Prefer not to answer

2. Educational Background:

    _No High School Diploma

    _High School Diploma

    _Bachelor Degree

    _Post College Degree

3. Race/Ethnicity:

    _African American

    _Caucasian

    _Hispanic

    _Check all that apply

    _Prefer not to answer

4. Age Group:

    _18-24

    _25-35

    _36-46

    _47 or above

Employment Status:

_Part-time

_Full-time

_Not employed

_Volunteer

_Prefer not to answer

5. Yearly Income:

_10,000 or below

_10,000-20,000

_20,000-30,000

_30,000 or above

_Prefer not to answer

Appendix C: Teacher Demographic Survey

1. Gender:

    _Male

    _Female

    _Transgender

    _Prefer not to answer

2. Race/Ethnicity:

    _African American

    _Caucasian

    _Hispanic

    _Check all that apply

3. Age Group:

    _21-30

    _31-40

    _41-50

    _51 or above

4. Educational Background:

    _Bachelor Degree

    _Master Degree

    _Educational Specialist

    _Doctoral Degree

5. Teaching Employment Years:

_5 years or below

_6-10 years

_11-16 years

_17 or above

6. Grades Taught:

_Pre-K

_K-2 Primary

_3-5 Intermediate

_Special Education

_English as a Second Language

Appendix D: Parent Interview Protocol

Phenomenological study: Parents' and Teachers' Perceptions of Parental Involvement

Time of Interview:

Date:

Method:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Script:

I am Sebrina Patton, a doctoral student at Walden University. I appreciate your willingness of participating in my study. The purpose of this interview is to understand your perceptions of parental involvement. In order to protect your identity, please do not say your name at any time during the interview. I will record this interview from beginning to end for a permanent record. Is it okay that I start the process of recording? (Action- Button pushed to record the meeting)

Questions:

1. What does parental involvement mean to you as a parent? (attitudes and beliefs)

    Probe: Can you provide more details about parental involvement?

2. How do you feel when your child asks questions about homework? (attitudes and beliefs)

    Probe: Can you give an example of such situations?

3. What positive home conditions can assist your child with home learning activities? (attitudes and beliefs)

    Probe: Can you present an example of a time this has happened?

4. Who do you feel is responsible for educating your child? (attitudes and beliefs)

    Probe: Can you provide more factors of why you chose your answer?

5. In your opinion, what are ways the school can help assist you with learning new strategies to support your child's learning? (attitudes and beliefs)

Probe: Can you provide an illustration of what you believe will work?

6. How can your education assist you to help your children? (perceived behavioral control)

Probe: Can you provide more details about assisting your child with his or her education?

7. What means do you use to ask your child's teacher questions about extracurricular activities, skills, progress reports, and report cards? (perceived behavioral control)

Probe: Can you add more facts about how you talk to the teacher? (conferences, e-mail, phone calls)

8. In which ways have you supported your child's education at a school function? (perceived behavioral control)

Probe: Can you tell more about the functions attended? (parent-teacher conference, literacy nights, PTA meetings)

9. What are barriers that have prevented you from participating with your child at school functions? (perceived behavioral control)

Probe: Can you explain more in detail about the barriers? (work schedule, transportation, illness)

10. How have you assisted your child with educational activities during their elementary years? (subjective norms)

Probe: Can you state examples of support? (discussions, made-up practice test, math drills)

I really appreciate your participation today. Is there anything that you would like to ask me about the study? Thanks so much for allowing me to interview you as a part of my study. Your responses will remain confidential.

Appendix E: Teacher Interview Protocol

Phenomenological study: Parents' and Teachers' Perceptions of Parental Involvement

Time of Interview:

Date:

Method:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Script:

I am Sebrina Patton, a student at Walden University. I appreciate your willingness of participating in my study. The purpose of this interview is to understand your perceptions of parental involvement. In order to protect your identity, please do not say your name at any time during the interview. I will record this interview from beginning to end for a permanent record. Is it okay that I start the process of recording? (Action- Button pushed to record the meeting)

Questions:
1. What does parental involvement mean to you? (home learning activities)

    Probe: Can you contribute more information about the question?

2. In your opinion, how often do you believe students ask for help at home with assignments? (home learning and communication)

    Probe: Can you explain this more in detail?

3. What strategies have you found to be effective to convince parents to visit the school to discuss their child's progress? (communication)

    Probe: Can you present more details about the strategies? (mission and vision)

4. What teaching strategies do you use to meet the students learning styles? (involvement at school)

> Probe: Can you give a few details about the teaching strategies?

5. How have you reached out to the parents to promote parental involvement? (involvement at school)

> Probe: Can you provide more examples?

6. How have you assisted parents with their child's academics? (positive home conditions)

> Probe: Can you explain more about the supportive measure?

7. How can teachers and parents work together to assist the students both at home and school? (positive home conditions)

> Probe: Can you provide more details about this statement?

8. What type of professional developments can the school offer to assist the teachers with encouraging parents to help their children succeed in school? (community partnerships)

> Probe: Can you give a few details about the professional development workshops?

9. What can community partners do to help with motivating the students to improve academic performance? (school adopters such as restaurants, department stores, and /or businesses) (community partnerships)

> Probe: Can you explain more in detail about the rewards the stakeholders could give the students? (free meals, gift certificates)

10. In your opinion, how can teachers work more closely with parents to help support their child's learning? (shared decision making)

> Probe: Can you provide a model of support?

I really appreciate your participation today. Is there anything that you would like to ask me about the study? Thanks so much for allowing me to interview you as a part of my study. Your responses will remain confidential.

Appendix F: Parent Coding Document

Codes	Theme	RQ	TPB(AB)	TPB(PBC)	TPB(SN)
Assist with homework	1	1,3	X		
Volunteering	2	1,3		X	
Confident toward education	2	1,3		X	
Distract free work area	1	1,3	X		
Parent responsible for children education	1	1,3	X		
Providing resources to parents	3	1,3	X		
Helping with parents' prior knowledge	1	1,3		X	
Communicating with teachers	3	1,3	X		
Participation Barrier	2	1,3		X	
Helping child with education	2	1,3	X		X

Note. RQ = Research Question, TPB = Theory of Planned Behavior, Components of Planned Behavior: AB = Attitudes and Beliefs, PBC = Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC), and SN = Subjective Norms.

Appendix G: Teacher Coding Document

Codes	Theme	RQ	PHC	COM	IAS	HLA	SDM	CP
Teachers' perceptions of parent engagement	1	2,3				X		
Parent-teacher meetings	3	2,3		X			X	
Learning groups	3	2,3			X			
Differentiated activities	3	2,3			X			
Reward Systems	3	2,3						X
Telephone conversations	3	2,3		X	X		X	
Students desire for homework assistance	1	2,3		X		X		
Engaging resources	2	2,3	X					
Parent teacher conferences	3	2,3		X			X	X
Professional developments	3	2,3		X				X
Educational facilities	3	2,3						X

Note. RQ = Research Question, Components of Epstein's (2009) Model: PHC = Positive Home Conditions, COM = Communication, IAS = Involvement at School, HLA = Home Learning Activities, SDM = Shared Decision Making, and CP = Community Partnerships.

Appendix H: Project Evaluation Survey

1. The white paper provided valuable research findings of parents' and teachers'

    perceptions of parental involvement.

_Agree

_Partially agree

_Neither agree or disagree

_Disagree

2. The white paper exemplified reasons of support to show how a community outreach

    will help support student achievement.

_Agree

_Partially agree

_Neither agree or disagree

_Disagree

3. The white paper demonstrated how parents, teachers, and stakeholders can work

    together using an action plan which consists of administration, advocation, and

    application in an understanding way.

_Agree

_Partially agree

_Neither agree or disagree

_Disagree

4. What is your overall perception of the white paper?

5. Do you believe that a community outreach will help the stakeholders in the

    community work together collaboratively to support student achievement?