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Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

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A Qualitative Case Study Examining Parental Involvement and Parent-School Partnership
Strategies in a Middle School: Perspectives of Parents, Teachers, and Administrators

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Jil M. Massucco

April 2021

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to:

To My Father God, I thank you for all the blessings in my life and for being my strength and refuge during this doctoral journey of mine. Thank you for stirring up my God-given gifts and talents, and for continuing to use and empower me for your glory!! Thank you for molding and shaping me to do your will and be the leader and example you desire me to be. Thank you, to my guardian angels, for keeping me stable, steadfast, unmovable, unshakable, and fixed under the Almighty's shadow.

To My Parents, words can never express your love that guided me and how your exemplary parental involvement during my upbringing and in my life has molded me to become the person and model parent I am. Thank you for always touching and improving the lives of so many parents, youth, students, and families—especially during your successful teaching and school administrative leadership careers. Thank you for instilling in me such high morals, values, and ideals and helping me become such an impassioned educator for youth and for families.

Daddy, thank you for your words of wisdom, amazing stories that provide loving and lifelong encouragement, and giving of yourself with an unwavering commitment as a phenomenal, loyal father! I love you, Daddy!

In Memory of My Mother – Mama, one of your favorite songs was “Wind Beneath My Wings,” and I know you are flying and soaring high in the wind—as you smile from the heavens above—and feel proud of my doctoral accomplishment. I love you, Mama!

In Memory of My Big Brother – Jay, I thank you for teaching me so much, especially teaching me the importance of an education; being my number one fan in the world of academia; and being such a positive light and an instrumental force in my schoolwork, projects, and

extracurricular activities. I love you and thank you for being one of my guardian angels in heaven!

To My daughter – Jian, you are the reason why I am a parent! I am so glad God chose you as my daughter and me as your mother. Giving birth to you and rearing you has been the best job God has blessed me to have, and being such an involved parent has been so fulfilling. I dedicate my dissertation to you in a special way because you should be the poster child for encouraging parents to pursue their dreams! You provided so much inspiration necessary for me to continue chasing this dream of mine. Thank you for your love and support; your sweet, encouraging, and consistently motivating words of comfort, gestures, and random acts of kindness during my long nights and hours of studying, assignments, projects, research, and writing. Thank you from the depths of my heart for believing in me! I love you to infinity and beyond, my Lovebuggy!

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Abstract

Parental involvement and parent-school partnership strategies are critical factors to children's academic success. In this qualitative case study, parents', teachers', and administrators' perceptions of parental involvement and parent-school partnership strategies of middle school children were examined. The setting of the study was in a Georgia middle school. The population for this single case study consisted of 6–8 grade middle school parents and school stakeholders located in a suburban Georgia school district during the 2019–2020 academic school year. The school was in a residential suburban area in the state of Georgia. The parent population consisted of parents with children who attended school in the school district, grades 6–8. All interviews provided a robust understanding regarding the perceptions within the school-family relationship, support, and involvement and how these factors impacted academic success. This study encompassed Joyce Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Involvement (Epstein, 2018) as a theoretical framework. Epstein's six types of identified involvement are parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating in the community; and each framed this study's research questions and analysis. The findings of this study offer insightful personal accounts that may help in the success of other parent, family, and school partnership strategies. The study offers insights that may assist parents and educators in better approaching family-school involvement and relationships among the stakeholders. A purposeful sampling method was used in the study. Eighteen parents, three teachers, and three administrators participated in the study. Data were collected and analyzed. The findings revealed barriers that parents, teachers, and administrators encounter in relation to school involvement and support. It was perceived that parental, school, and community involvement were important for children's academic success and that parent-school partnerships and support were critically

necessary. The paper discussed the implications of the research findings as well as suggestions for future research.

Keywords: parental involvement, stakeholders, collaboration, barriers, academic success

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Parental involvement has been viewed as a profound gateway to student accomplishment (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012). Viable interests in relation to parental involvement remain among stakeholders such as families, the community, educational leaders, and government officials. The engagement of parents within the school community (i.e., with faculty, staff, and administration) are critical factors in academic success (EdSource, 2019; Harris & Robinson, 2016; Kim & Bryan, 2017; Lukie et al., 2014; Marschall & Shah, 2016; Núñez et al., 2015). Harris and Robinson (2016) believed that active parental participation is a precursor for academic success. Hence, parents have a fundamental duty to improve their children's academic achievement.

According to Epstein (2018), parental involvement is rewarding for children and significantly influences children's academic accomplishments. Initially, the family is seen as the first educational support for children. Therefore, parents have a profound influence on the development of their children. In addition, parents have a critical responsibility to manage and support the development of their children. Parental choices can help foster a flourishing and enlightening environment for their children to develop academic potential and self-esteem. Parents should also play an active role in their children's free time, including attending extracurricular activities and school events. Cheung and Pomerantz (2012) asserted that parental interactions within the school community enhance and motivate academic achievement among students. Similarly, formidable education and engagement from school faculty—who work diligently to ensure parents are involved—help children learn about the development of socialization, communication, and academic skills to achieve academic success.

The role of parental involvement in student success is further enhanced by a positive school culture (Muzvidziwa, 2017). Muzvidziwa reported that essential characteristics of

positive school culture include providing effective, compassionate educational leadership; having reciprocal communication among parents, students, teachers, and administrators; and promoting academic excellence through interactive programming with parents and students. Cultivating influential partnerships and a consistent commitment that motivates students will further promote a positive school culture (Muzvidziwa, 2017). Such a culture provides a welcoming setting that fosters and supports the involvement of parents. Thus, the role of parental involvement is associated with enhanced education which provides friendly, collaborative interactions, and networking; optimistic communication; constructive feedback; and cooperation between both parents and the school (Robinson & Harris, 2015). This chapter provides the background of the study, statement of the problem, conceptual basis for the study, purpose of the study, research questions, and definition of key terms.

Background of the Study

Jeynes (2018) conveyed that school faculty, staff, and administration are pivotal factors in ensuring a positive community of practice for both students and parents. Therefore, when there is a warm, inviting school culture that is evident to parents and students, such a community promotes, develops, encourages, and supports parental participation and responsibilities in school activities (Jeynes, 2018). Parents are also responsible for educating and interacting with their children through school curricula via supervising homework and communicating with teachers (Holloway et al., 2008). Positive cooperation and communication between parents and schools encourage the development and academic success of children. Parents who engage in the education and academic success of their children at home and school are proactively involved in the process (Mytton et al., 2014). As a result of playing an active role in the academic process, parental interest and involvement can then serve as a cornerstone of motivation and can impact

the learning process and academic potential of their children at school (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017).

Hornby (2011) explained that children's academic success depends not only on the school but also on the parents. However, schools must provide more programs to involve parents and families. Consequently, parents must take part in school events and familiarize themselves to become proficient and participate in school matters such as school policy. For instance, parents should motivate their children to learn, create a supportive family environment, and support their children's school undertakings (i.e., school milestones, programs, celebrations) to promote and improve the academic success of their children (Park & Holloway, 2017). Involved parents are aware of what challenges their children are experiencing in school and how their children interact with others within the school community (Yoder & Lopez, 2013). Therefore, involved parents are known to provide the support, encouragement, motivation, and assistance that their children need to learn and succeed academically (Hornby, 2011).

Numerous studies have demonstrated a connection between parental commitment to education and the academic success of children. For example, Chohan and Khan (2010) examined the impact of academic support from parents on the educational success of 4th-grade students in a public school setting. Their findings showed that when parents are engaged in their children's education, there is a positive impact on academic success. Patel and Agbenyega (2013) found that when parents build a positive relationship with teachers, it enables reinforcement at home from what the child learned at school. Further, Yoder and Lopez (2013) noted that parental involvement, including homework support and participation in school programs, is related to student achievement. Parental involvement has advantages in relation to children's performance, personality development, and behavior. Yoder and Lopez (2013)

affirmed that children whose parents are engaged within the school community reap benefits, as their children's abilities and motivations to succeed academically are enhanced. Shepard et al. (2012) stated that globally, parental involvement is seen as a vital element in increasing the quality of education in order to have favorable student outcomes. Throughout the world, schools are aware of the connection between the academic support of students and their academic success (Shepard et al., 2012). Moreover, within the support and assistance accessible to students, involvement among parents is viewed as a profound gateway to student accomplishment (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012). Considering the critical likelihood of parental involvement within the school-home setting, this research explores the importance of parental involvement in student academic success and identify strategies that can help strengthen and support parental involvement in schools.

Studies of parental involvement determined that parents are catalysts to both school involvement and their children's achievement at school (Hilado et al., 2013). Hilado et al. (2013) reported that parental involvement varies as a result of factors that impact some homes (i.e., school outreach, approaches to parenting, work-related schedules, needs of the student, family resources, socioeconomic class). Researchers are investigating parental involvement so that student success can be enhanced (Vellymalay, 2012). Findings underpin that receptive parent-student practices and school interactions are significant components of a child's educational development (Lewis-Antoine, 2012; Vellymalay, 2012).

Academic success is strongly influenced by the efficacy of educational support from parents and teachers (Jelas et al., 2016). This educational success can be the result of support and involvement the child received that adequately influenced the desire and motivation put forth to succeed academically (Jelas et al., 2016). While the need for parental involvement is extensive,

parents are plagued with intensifying demands of maintaining their duties of work and home life. Despite the challenges, having insight into how parents are able to create a synergy and balance within the school-home setting and understanding the impact when parents are unable to do so are key components to comprehending how parental involvement can maximize school-home relationships and improve academic achievement. Williams and Sánchez (2013) pointed out that parent and school relationships are to be promoted by the school with procedures designed to enhance parent-teacher communication. However, this has been known to be more difficult to accomplish (Epstein, 2018). Parents need additional direction from the school for support and assistance.

Christensen et al. (2011) underscored the importance of schools forging better relationships so that parents can be involved in both home and school activities that enhance their children's academic, emotional, and social well-being. Hence, when schools and families collaborate, the student is strengthened academically, emotionally, and socially. In contrast, parents have encountered obstacles such as busy work schedules, time management, transportation challenges, lack of parental resources at the school, home life responsibilities, race, culture, and socioeconomic factors that prevent parental involvement (Williams & Sánchez, 2013). Parental involvement remains especially challenging due to the clear disengagement and lack of collaboration between parents and schools. Although collaboration has taken place between some parents and schools—effective, sustainable collaborative efforts continue to evolve (Kim & Bryan, 2017). School faculty and staff are aware of the active role that parents should play in the academic success of their children. However, partnerships between parents and schools remain a priority, as schools fail to practice coordinated efforts to support parental engagement (Wang et al., 2019).

Williams and Sánchez (2013) reported that teachers and administrative staff often view parents as not understanding school protocol, materials, and how students learn in the classroom. Such patterns found in schools demonstrate how parents face challenges in actively participating in the education of their children. Rapp and Duncan (2012) viewed a similar perspective, as they pointed out that parents experience obstacles in communicating with school leaders. As a result, most parents feel hindered in their school involvement. To that end, Llamas and Tuazon (2016) found that schools should be mandated to create programs that will enhance parental involvement in education. When schools actively seek out involvement in events designed for parents (i.e., PTA meetings, school committee meetings, workshops, fundraisers, school fairs, and family-school-oriented recreational programs), a positive connection between parents, the child, and the school can be developed. Hence, Llamas and Tuazon (2016) further asserted that parents then feel involved in making decisions to improve the quality of education for their children, such as providing input about curricula development or completing teacher evaluation forms.

Similarly, Williams and Sánchez (2013) maintained that parents also feel connected and involved in their children's school by establishing, setting, and engaging in school governance; and by applying school policies and procedures via membership on school councils. Parents also involve themselves by working toward and practicing higher levels of "parenting self-efficacy" by proactively enlisting in their children's school events, homework, and programs through motivation, optimism, and greater personal parental capabilities and efforts to better assist their children in various academic feats (Holloway et al., 2016). These outcomes contribute to decision-making processes that directly impact the school's learning environment and are needed to promote parental involvement to create an environment that enhances academic success.

Families who involve themselves in parenting initiatives in order to become more engaged in their children's education see improvements in their children's schoolwork, emotional well-being, and social behavior (Baharudin et al., 2010; Herrell, 2011; Holloway et al., 2008; Jeynes, 2018; Lewis-Antoine, 2012; Pattnaik & Sriram, 2010; Wyche, 2010). Rapp and Duncan (2012) suggested that schools must bring about a collaborative, democratic community of practice whereby parents' opinions, beliefs, and ideas are shared and utilized; and all school stakeholders work toward academic success. Consequently, a method (i.e., construct) frames the forthcoming analysis of the role of parental involvement in student academic success.

Statement of the Problem

Parental involvement as it relates to student academic success has emerged as a significant issue in education. Snell et al. (2018) advocated that one of the most critical factors in a child's success in school and life is the family-home component. In addition to parental involvement within the family unit and home environment, parental involvement in school is also fundamental. All parents and schools should play a significant role in their children's academic success within both home and school settings. Researchers have articulated that parent-school partnerships can significantly impact school and academic success (Epstein, 2018).

Therefore, the problem to be investigated by this study is the disconnect between parents (the home) and the school and to address partnership gaps that are largely due to the lack of relationships established between the child's school and parents. Schools have not created or sustained a suitable environment for parents to actively feel like partners in their children's school and education. Effective partnership strategies have not been established between schools and families.

Snell et al. (2018) maintained that active parental involvement is more pivotal to student achievement than any social factor. Parental involvement strategies must be reevaluated to find new methods that will improve engagement and academic success, thereby narrowing the inconsistencies between socioeconomic classes. Alexander et al. (2017) found that students were not performing at desirable, optimal levels in classroom subject areas to reach academic success due to the lack of parental involvement in schools. Therefore, addressing this problem with innovative solutions between parents and school relationships is key. Throughout the United States, building and sustaining such relationships among teachers and families remains a constant barrier in K-12 schools. Baker et al. (2016) highlighted significant consistent parental involvement barriers among families such as competing obligations; level of education; socioeconomic, cultural, and communication challenges with the school; and time conflicts between parents and teachers. It has long been believed that parent-teacher communication, involvement, and engagement promote an array of positive student academic outcomes such as higher achievement, significant involvement in schoolwork, and lower dropout rates (Park & Holloway, 2017). Children learn, grow, and evolve productively when parents and schools connect with each other (Epstein, 2018).

Current principles in relation to parental involvement do not correspond with what research suggests benefits parents. Research indicates that it is the school's professional obligation to consistently cultivate and nurture the role of parents as partners to aid in increasing parental engagement and academic success (Park & Holloway, 2017). Park and Holloway suggested that in order to improve parental involvement in schools, parents and schools should forge necessary relationships with one another. Jeynes (2018) advised that with poorly developed and ineffective parental involvement strategies, students have suffered academically. Thus, it is

paramount that all stakeholders contribute to the process by effectively communicating and collaborating (Jeynes, 2018). As Brown et al. (2019) noted, the disconnect between parents and schools is due to the types of rapport that are lacking between the school and parents. Schools have not developed an enrichment-filled culture where parents can actively become involved and participate directly in academic activities (Brown et al., 2019; Chohan & Khan, 2010; Jeynes, 2018). Mutodi and Ngirande (2014) maintained that schools do not have parental resources where parents can feel welcome and engaged by attending meetings, workshops, and training created specifically to meet their needs. Successful, sustainable partnerships have not been mainstreamed between school personnel and homes (Alexander, 2016; Alexander et al., 2017). Identifying successful dynamics and practical methods to promote parental involvement must still be implemented in schools (Epstein, 2018; Mutodi & Ngirande, 2014). Hence, there is very little research that investigates effective parental involvement in schools (Alexander, 2016; Alexander et al., 2017; Brown et al., 2019; Chohan & Khan, 2010; Epstein, 2018; Harris & Robinson, 2016; Jeynes, 2018; Mutodi & Ngirande, 2014).

Conceptual Basis for the Study

The conceptual basis for this study is addressed by utilizing the works of Joyce Epstein's (2018) six types of parental involvement from the School-Home-Community Partnership of Overlapping Spheres of Influence. The spheres of influence focus on six essential components of parental involvement: parenting, learning at home, communication, decision-making, volunteering, and collaborating with the community. Epstein's framework of school, family, and community partnerships is a significant model used to analyze the relationship between schools, families, and communities as it relates to the success of the child. This qualitative design also examines and provides insight into parental and school involvement relating to student success

via Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence and investigate ways schoolteachers and administrators are to be engaged in advocating school, family, and community involvement (Caño et al., 2016). Increased parental involvement will help bring resolve to the continued problem of substandard academic performance (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017; McNeal, 2014). Examining the role of parental involvement and the likelihood of academic success depends on all key stakeholders working strategically to create a more conducive and optimistic outlook for parents and schools and develop strong ties that will ultimately lead to academic success among children.

Epstein categorized parental involvement through a myriad of concepts and a value system of beliefs (spheres of parental involvement influences to be discussed) that provide the importance and support of parental involvement in schools and its impact on academic achievement. Current parental involvement and academic success frameworks (Epstein & Dauber, 1991/2016; Von Otter & Stenberg, 2015) are used to further address parental involvement and its role in academic success. Another theoretical dimension of parental involvement was adopted from Ajzen's theory of planned behavior (TPB), which was utilized by Perry and Langley (2013). These researchers have asserted theoretical and conceptual explanations that support the critical importance of parental involvement and school initiatives that are necessary to foster favorable outcomes between parents and schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study was to examine the perspectives of parents, teachers, and administrators on the impact of parental involvement and academic success. Parental involvement in children's education is favorably associated with academic success (Epstein, 2018; Nam & Park, 2014; Park & Holloway, 2017). There is evidence that suggests the positive

influence and impact of parental involvement in schools has a positive effect on academic achievement (Caño et al., 2016). The findings of this study offer beneficial information about parental involvement by examining the roles and perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators as they relate to student success, identifying strategies for enhanced parent-school outcomes, and illustrating data for a middle school district when planning school partnership initiatives. This provides insight into the perspectives of parents and school personnel in relation to effective parental engagement practices. This study helps examine ways to enhance communication and collaboration between parents and schools and to strengthen successful parental involvement in order to accomplish student academic success. The results will be utilized to assist faculty and administration with developing an effective plan for enhancing parental involvement and academic success.

Research Questions

Q1. How do parents and schools define parental involvement?

Q2. In what ways do parents, teachers, and administrators collectively collaborate to promote parental involvement and foster academic success among students?

Q3. What are the barriers that impede parental involvement in the student's school life?

Q4. Which best practices contribute to higher levels of parental involvement among parents and schools?

The results of this study are expected to provide benefits not only for parents but also for the school. In an effort to improve parental involvement in the schools, the barriers that impede their involvement should be understood. Following the results of this investigation, schools can then arrange programs that are needed from the parents' perspective. Accordingly, parents will

then have successful alternatives for participation in the education and, ultimately, the academic success of their children.

Definition of Key Terms

Academic success. Academic success was viewed as achievement in student performance, educational goals, and acquisition of skills and knowledge to excel and succeed in her/his overall school experience (Georgia Department of Education, 2010).

Barriers to parental involvement. Barriers to parental involvement are causes that contribute to the lack of involvement by parents (Wherry, 2009).

Collaboration. Collaboration depicts identifying, establishing, and implementing partnerships among a group of people to strengthen and support the missions, goals, and objectives of the school's culture (Waldron & McLeskey, 2010).

Parental involvement. Parental involvement in education encompasses the overall responsibilities in relation to family and school aimed at fostering student success (Alexander, 2016). Throughout this study, parental involvement was viewed as any affiliation, correlation, or relationship in the home that supports a student's academic growth and success.

Parenting self-efficacy. Parenting self-efficacy are the beliefs that parents have of their own personal capabilities to successfully parent, strategically structure, and properly execute competent courses of action to effectively develop and achieve specific goals in their children (Wittkowski et al., 2017).

Parents. For the purpose of this study, parents include family members, guardians, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and siblings who are involved in school undertakings for the benefit of a student.

Parent-School Partnerships. Parent-school partnerships are a shared responsibility when stakeholders actively and proactively work cohesively to engage in ways to support and enhance children's development and learning.

Socioeconomic status. Socioeconomic status (SES) is the total measure of a person's income, education, and occupation (Park & Holloway, 2017). The SES of this research was measured utilizing Vellymalay's (2012) study on the correlation between parental involvement and academic success SES to compute variables that create the families' SES (i.e., parents' income, education, and employment status).

Stakeholders. Stakeholders may include parents, teachers, administrators, students, community leaders, community groups, youth and professional organizations, school boards, faith-based community members, and the media.

Summary and Organization of the Study

Included in Chapter 1 was the introduction, which consisted of an overview of the study of parental involvement and its role in academic success, the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, and definition of key terms. A review of the literature addressing the overall significance of the study is provided in Chapter 2. Chapter Two's focus encompasses the history of parental involvement, parents' perceptions on the impact of their school involvement, barriers to parental involvement, strategies for engaging parents within schools to promote children's academic success, conceptual and theoretical frameworks of theorists, components of parental involvement, and best practices and benefits of parental involvement. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology of the study, participants, setting, instrumentation, collection of data, and analysis. Chapter 4 provides the results of the study. Chapter 5 provides discussion, conclusions, and recommendations of this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of parents, teachers, and administrators in relation to parental involvement and academic success and to identify strategies that enhance parental involvement. Parental involvement in a child's education is linked to academic success (Epstein, 2018; Nam & Park, 2014; Park & Holloway, 2017). When schools form alliances and collaborative partnerships with parents to support children's education, academic success among those children prevails (Epstein, 2018). This chapter encompasses the history of parental involvement, parents' perceptions of the impact of their school involvement, barriers to parental involvement, and strategies for engaging parents within schools to promote children's academic success.

This chapter also explores conceptual and theoretical frameworks of parental involvement. More importantly, a conceptual framework from the perspective of Epstein's (2018) six essential components of the school-family-community partnerships that enhance parental involvement (i.e., parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community) is featured. Insight regarding best practices and the benefits of parental involvement in schools is also developed in this chapter.

Parent-School Partnerships

Collaborative parent partnerships are essential in the academic success of their children (Epstein, 2018). Therefore, it is the responsibility of the school to view parents as partners (Erdener, 2014). It is critical to enhance parental involvement in schools with positive parent-teacher relationships. Nationally, positive parent-teacher practices in K-12 education have remained on the forefront due to the lack of collaborative, consistent partnering and parental involvement sustainability in schools (Williams & Sánchez, 2013).

Developing parental involvement is a fundamental aspect of a teacher's responsibility (Snell et al., 2018). According to Wang et al. (2019), teachers from elementary, middle, and high school levels asserted that the most critical aspect in various schools is the "lack of parental involvement," which was listed as a top concern. However, successful solutions to creating meaningful parent-school partnerships are scarce (Wang et al., 2019). Also, the disparities in relation to parental involvement among various racial ethnicities and socioeconomic classes are alarming for parents and educational stakeholders (Jeynes, 2018). Jeynes (2018) viewed parental involvement as being highly related to family structure and availability.

According to the 2018 National Survey of Children's Health, adolescent children of single-parent homes and those from homes with stepfamilies had parents with lower educational expectations for their children who were less likely to involve themselves in their child's school undertakings, schoolwork, or parental involvement activities compared to parents of children with an intact biological household or intact married family (Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative, 2018). Additionally, survey results revealed that adolescents from families experiencing divorce, parental job layoffs, or other traumatic life events had a decreased chance of parental involvement, academic success, and student persistence. Biological family structures that remained intact were reported to demonstrate routine and consistent parental involvement in their children's schooling, even during the child's adolescent years. It was also reported that two-parent family structures consisted of parents who felt more connected with school personnel, engaged more in school activities, discussed school more as a family, and promoted the importance of academic excellence greater than other family structures (Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative, 2018).

Hence, schools must have the accountability to effectively communicate with all parents, especially those parents who feel excluded. Parental involvement is a determining factor in a child's academic performance and success in school. When parents have a sense of belongingness from teachers and other school personnel, they display interest in the undertakings in the school (Jeynes, 2018). Although the development and sustainability of parent-school partnerships are vital, teachers have reported that they are ill-prepared with regard to creating and maintaining partnerships with parents (Yoder & Lopez, 2013).

The National Middle School Association—established in 1973 to represent and support various educational stakeholders and school personnel—contends that a middle school is successful when it has accomplished strong parent-teacher-home-school ties (Schaefer et al., 2016). When schools foster the concept of parental participation and involvement, children grow and succeed from a social, emotional, and academic perspective (Nam & Park, 2014). When there are efforts of communication and engagement from parents and schools- parental involvement is enhanced, academic success is achieved, and parents are made to feel valued and appreciated by teachers. Collaborative partnerships among parents and schools develop into affirmative working relationships that are pivotal to achieving academic success (Hutchins, 2011). Parents should always feel comfortable and appreciated by teachers when visiting their children's schools (Keane, 2016). Keane (2016) posited that the most beneficial aspect for middle school teachers is promoting parental engagement and that most parental involvement interventions and studies have focused on the elementary grade levels rather than middle and secondary grade levels.

Hill and Taylor (2004) also found a considerable decrease in parental involvement in middle schools. According to Hill and Taylor, parental involvement begins to decline at the

middle school grade levels, as children choose to be more independent. Similarly, during middle school, Hutchins (2011) pointed out that adolescents prefer their parents to play a less active and more covert role in involvement with school events. Middle schools attributed a major decrease in parental involvement from elementary to middle school years, as parents believed that it is a good idea to begin giving children space to be independent to develop their own identity (Hutchins, 2011).

Innerebner and Anderson (2010) affirmed that parents begin thinking that their children no longer want to have parental involvement during the middle and high school years. In addition, Hill and Tyson (2009) maintained that due to more advanced, accelerated middle school curricula compared to previous elementary curricula, parents feel ill-prepared and less confident to assist their middle schoolers with homework, school projects, and achieving academic success. Therefore, parents make the choice to lessen and diminish their middle school involvement which can ultimately impact academic persistence and achievement (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Hutchins, 2011; Innerebner & Anderson, 2010; Northouse, 2013).

Hill and Tyson also highlighted that parental involvement declines during middle school years. Changes in school settings from elementary school to middle school begin; family relationships and dynamics shift as a result of the child experiencing developmental and adolescent changes and processes, and parents' involvement such as helping with homework and academic motivational measures during middle school milestones decline. Therefore, studies are being conducted in relation to fostering bonds between parents, home life, and schools (Jeynes, 2018). Creating such meaningful bonds is fundamental to any successful outcome. Hughes and Kwok (2007) asserted that effective, successful relationships among parents and teachers yield a favorable outcome in student success. Henderson and Mapp (2002) postulated that when

children's education is well-supported by parents and teachers, children succeed in school. To further enhance parental involvement, parents and teachers must be willing and proactive to champion positive, consistent relationships formulated by effective communication and respect (Epstein, 2018). With the decline of parental involvement among middle school grade levels, Epstein (2018) maintained that there are no simple solutions for teachers and principals to get parents more involved.

In addition to the decrease in parental involvement in middle school, Park and Holloway (2017) stated that children's self-esteem is also compromised once middle school begins. As a result of puberty and adolescence, some will retreat from their parents and begin to focus more on their peers' opinions. When the child's focus changes this way- successful academic outcomes begin to falter, and student persistence wavers (Hill & Taylor, 2004; Robinson & Harris, 2015). A middle school study on parent-school relationships by Karibayeva and Bogar (2014) concluded that when there is proactive parent-school communication there are positive outcomes with academic achievement among students. Consequently, middle schools must promote more plans for parents to engage with teachers. When there is parent-teacher collaboration, teachers have more conducive opportunities with activities that help students reach academic success and assist parents to get involved (Karibayeva & Bogar, 2014). Research by Epstein (2018) asserted that consistent parental involvement brought forth a better outlook and greater achievement of students in school.

Studies have also shown that parents who have very little involvement in their children's schools and academic lives are usually from households with disparaging levels of education such as very little or no education or dropouts (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017). Similarly, parents who support the idea that only teachers are to be held accountable for being the sole persons to

provide educational tools for the children are not interested in forming an alliance or rapport with teachers (Alexander, 2016). Some parents, who have had negatively challenging experiences with teachers when they were in school, opt out of involvement or neglect interactions with their children's teacher (Epstein, 2018).

Characteristics of an Effective Parent-Teacher Relationship

It is important that teachers recognize the importance and value of an effective parent-teacher relationship. Developing and maintaining effective relationships with parents can be a lengthy process that takes time, experience, motivation, sincerity, open communication, persistence, and diligence. The level of a teacher's personal and professional development can play a major role in determining how effective a parent-teacher relationship will be (Williams & Sánchez, 2013). However, for a parent-teacher relationship to function effectively- teachers must demonstrate an authentic willingness, be respectful of parents and families, and practice successful communication. Practicing a transparent, consistent commitment to the process of parental involvement is key. Parental self-image improves when more parent-teacher collaborations are practiced (Epstein, 2018).

Jeynes (2018) identified a collaborative relationship whereby parents and teachers shared frequent rights and responsibilities and contributed equally to the process. Jeynes (2018) also proposed that it is important to have a flourishing, collaborative partnership that includes mutual respect for skills, shared goals, and shared decision-making. Furthermore, students become more aware and appreciative when they observe their parents working well with the teachers and sharing common goals and objectives in striving together for the success of the child (Kim & Bryan, 2017).

Fullan (2011) stated that it is essential for verbal communication among teachers and parents. Verbal dialogue is more vital than written verbal exchange between the two. Interacting verbally on a consistent basis is helpful to learn one another's efforts and personality styles to enable effective communication and understanding (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; Chohan & Khan, 2010). Without unbiased, effective communication from the teacher, the exchange would then be unsuccessful (Chohan & Khan, 2010). Effective conversations among parents and school personnel are fundamental to developing school-family relationships. School communities that work well with parents make positive investments in relationships that can impart academic success among children (Fullan, 2011). Through effective communication, parents can understand and become involved with various school undertakings.

Effective parent-teacher communication creates a meaningful partnership that can catapult the child academically (Epstein, 2018). Positive, effective school communication is acknowledged to strongly influence parents' involvement and parental collaboration and involvement (Epstein, 2018; Erdener, 2014; Northouse, 2013; Yoder & Lopez, 2013). Northouse (2013) explained that consistent parent-teacher conversations convince parents of the teachers' interest and are vital in helping to provide collective clarity. Therefore, it is important that teachers put forth the effort to respect any differences such as cultural variations within the student's families (Baharudin et al., 2010). Teachers must practice mindfulness in relation to any language barriers while speaking with parents (Alexander et al., 2017).

Keane (2016) referred to verbal exchanges between parents and teachers as an opportunity for thoughtful, well-planned time spent to promote collaborations with one another. Ensuring communication among parents and schools increases academic achievement among students (Hilado et al., 2013). Graham-Clay (2005) noted that when parents have concerns and

communicate with the teachers or school administrators, there is a noticeable improvement in school personnel partnering more effectively with parents, and success among students increases. Communication of this magnitude is an invaluable aspect in creating viable, collaborative partnerships between home and school (Griffin & Galassi, 2010).

Epstein (2018) also demonstrated that having frequent and important conversations among parents and teachers is the foundation whereby other successful parental involvement manifests. Active, enrichment-filled communications between parents and teachers benefit scholarly achievement (Keane, 2016). Teachers and other school officials must practice persistence with parents to make sure that meaningful conversations take place. Marzano and Pickering (2007) concluded that pleasant, happy, engaging parental school involvement relies heavily on effective communication, participation, and governance.

Although parental involvement warrants communication, the most monumental aspect that teachers must encounter is gaining initial trust from the parents (Gartrell, 2013). Trust is a vital component for effective human relationships to exist. When parents gain the trust of their children's teachers, there is a willingness and confidence presented. The benevolence of open, respectful, truthful, and credible communication from teachers allows parents to find trust and a desire to seek out school connections and partnerships (Epstein, 2018). For decades, research has shown that when relationships between home and school are analyzed- the teacher has the authority, and the parent functions in simply a client position (Okeke, 2014).

Recently, research has shown the importance of parent-teacher relationships, mutual respect, and social trust that must take place to establish improved parental involvement and enlisting the parent as a partner, not a client (Brown et al., 2019; Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Reece et al., 2013). Confidence between parents and teachers is a critical element in obtaining

gratifying school-family relations. Maintaining ongoing communication, positive or negative, between schools and families provides the foundation for a trusting partnership. Bryk and Schneider (2003) believed that “relational trust is the connective tissue that binds parents and schools together to advance the education and welfare of students” (p. 44). Bracke and Corts (2012) stated that a conducive partnership must entail a high level of mutual trust and respect; a consistent exchange of information, such as the child’s class work, test scores, grades, interests, strengths, and improvement in specific subject areas, and behavior/conduct in the classroom and on school campus; agreement on goals and strategies; and sharing of rights and responsibilities. Williams and Sánchez (2013) argued that positive relationships allow people to feel a connection and identify with groups, which enables one to shape her/his willingness to collaborate and share knowledge with one another.

Erdener (2014) shared that if parents and teachers do not trust each other, it is difficult to ever have a viable relationship. EdSource (2019) affirmed that trust helps mediate and reduce the perception of risks people experience and provides a level of confidence for those involved. Therefore, when relationships are not managed in a productive way, there is a loss of confidence and trust and decreased cohesiveness (Gartrell, 2013). An adverse school culture with ineffective leadership and a weak organizational structure will be problematic in developing and sustaining lasting, trusting relationships (Wang et al., 2019). Similarly, school officials and leaders must impart collaborative efforts and trust by making their positions and intentions for the school known to families and teachers.

Rosen (2013) concluded that trust is paramount to any relationship, as individuals must feel comfortable sharing. Although building trust is challenging, it is required to sustain the existence of any successful relationship. When mutual trust and respect are optimal in

relationships, negativity and conflict are not issues. Although there can be uncertainties in relationships, all stakeholders must be willing to take the risk. They must be willing to take part in creating trust within families and communities (Rosen, 2013). Northouse (2013) pointed out that trust has to do with being predictable or reliable, even in situations that are uncertain and evident. It is important that school officials develop strategies to encourage parental involvement and increase cooperation and trust between parents and schools. Research has shown that school family partnerships are recognized as the primary contributor to improving trust in schools (Rosen, 2013). Also, when trust is fostered in families and schools, there is higher student achievement and success (Gartrell, 2013; Tschannen-Moran, 2004).

When confidence and communication are practiced consistently, then parents and school personnel can further strengthen their relationships by utilizing Epstein's (2018) typology, which ultimately enhances parental involvement and academic success. Research has shown that parental involvement in schools is successful when there is respect and discussions among parents and teachers (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). In addition, Meier (2003) and Epstein (2018) stated that creating ways to build trust among parents, teachers, students, and school leaders is the most significant component of the success in school communities.

Commitment displays a successful school system where school personnel extend themselves above and beyond their job duties and responsibilities and where both parents and teachers willingly work together (Reece et al., 2013). Committing to work toward a successful parent-school relationship is necessary from parents and schools to improve parental involvement. Although teachers must be accountable to engage in outreach efforts of parents, it is also the responsibility of the parents to have committed attitudes. Mutual involvement among parents and teachers tends to strengthen when schools focus more on the shared commitment to

children (Alexander, 2016). According to Ardel and Eccles (2001) the development and consistency of creating flourishing parent-teacher partnerships is the responsibility of the stakeholders involved in the academic process. Harris and Robinson (2016) viewed dedication and commitment as keeping one's word and never breaking a promise. These researchers affirmed parent-teacher commitment as a trusting relationship comprised of allegiance, consistency, and capability.

Epstein (2018) maintained that parents and schools of middle school children receive positive outcomes as a result of collaborative, consistent partnerships with teachers. Moreover, Epstein (2018) shared that although parental involvement is compelling for all grade levels, middle school remains significantly paramount due to parents appearing to become lackadaisical and not as involved in their children's academic lives. Hill and Taylor (2004) noted parents being more engaged and involved in their children's elementary grade levels and a decline is noticeable upon entrance into middle school. Assalahi (2015) argued that from a nationwide perspective, there are parental involvement barriers in middle schools, and the implementation of effective strategies to promote parental involvement programs in schools has not been executed properly. Therefore, cultivating opportunities to address and enhance parental involvement in middle schools is of utmost importance (Gutman & Eccles, 2007; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Robinson & Harris, 2015).

Historical Background of Parental Involvement

Before educational leaders (such as educational pioneer- Horace Mann) began advocating for public schools, education was propagated by the family unit within the home (Rapp & Duncan, 2012). At such a time, the family belief system was comprised of high ideals, values, and a strong work ethic that the family unit and the community viewed as an appropriate concept

for effective learning and societal status (Pulliam, 1987). Children who were receiving an education were taught within their homes in lieu of being educated publicly (Nam & Park, 2014). Both the church and family unit (parents) had jurisdiction over the educational system and were in control of hiring teachers, ensuring curricula were developed, and providing the necessary skills for students to thrive educationally (Hiatt-Michael, 1994). Education then began to progress in a different way with varying boards of education consisting of local religious leaders and parents who decided the fate of many educational programs and schools (Hiatt-Michael, 1994). Individualized curricula perspectives from various socioeconomic classes of parents were on the forefront of education and mainly focused on reading, writing, and religion (Lin, 2001).

Toward the latter part of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, educational equality was at the forefront. Advocates and leaders in education created public schools to provide education for all children at both the elementary and secondary levels, despite socioeconomic status and parents being unable to provide a viable education in the home (Cremin, 1961). The nineteenth century also brought about children choosing work over school (Lin, 2001). As the lives of children evolved, parents endorsed the idea of their children learning a trade or vocation to begin earning wages and making a living. As a result of older children learning a vocation and beginning to earn a living, child labor laws were improved and redeveloped by labor organizers to enhance children's labor and working conditions (Cremin, 1961). Children chose to be farmers, factory workers, and miners to earn suitable wages to help support their parents and families rather than choosing an education (Cremin, 1961).

Soon after children began working rather than attending school; however, truancy laws were passed in all states to protect children, so they could stay in school instead of dropping out to begin work (Cremin, 1961). Parents were no longer entitled to keep their children absent from

school without consent from school leaders. Hence, parental involvement within the educational system plummeted (Cremin, 1961). Parental involvement became minimal, as parents had no authority over their children's education; and collaborative partnerships among parents and schools became difficult to establish (Hiatt-Michael, 1994). During this time, parental control decreased; and schools began to control the educational systems, locally, on the district level, and state-wide (Cremin, 1961). Hiatt-Michael (1994) maintained that teachers, specifically, were expected to only offer educational commentary and expertise, and community opinions toward education were no longer vital to consider for curriculum and instruction in the United States; schools replaced parenting and community-wide efforts for education. Large, single-room school settings with varying ages being taught became obsolete (Cremin, 1961).

In 1848, students began to be classified by specific grade levels with Massachusetts noted as the first state to implement classified grades and specific curricula for children (Hiatt-Michael, 1994). Consequently- graded classrooms, additional school personnel such as faculty to teach and administrators to lead, and specific curricula for all grades grew prevalent across the United States. Soon after- parental power, influence, and involvement continued to decrease throughout schools; and the leadership from the board of parents and religious leaders within the educational system evolved to what would be referenced as school superintendent leadership (Hiatt-Michael, 1994).

In 1897, following the reduction of parental involvement in schools, upper and middle-class mothers remained proactive and began the National Congress of Mothers (NCM), facilitating and promoting effective education of their children's academic development and success in schools (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). As the twentieth century began, the work of these women brought about the establishment of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA; Hiatt-

Michael, 1994). The PTA was the building block that cultivated a partnership between home and school. In addition, the PTA became influential in parental involvement and in its benefits that lead to academic success.

Educational legislative programming and federally funded initiatives, such as Project Head Start, the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965, the Education for All Handicapped Act of 1974, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), and Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) promoted parental involvement in children's education (Hiatt-Michael, 1994). With such active legislation in place, parents were mandated to participate and engage in school activities and promote academic achievement (Hiatt-Michael, 1994). To date, educational frameworks such as the aforementioned concepts are vital in accomplishing goals that apprise schools, parents, families, and the community at large about education and the importance of engaging parents so that they may provide the support of their children to bring about academic achievement and success (Reece et al., 2013). Consequently, Epstein (2018) proposed that the role of parents was to ensure their children's educational upbringing with viable and effective involvement in schools and with strong foundational support of core ideals and values that promote overall academic achievement.

Parents' Perception on Parental Involvement

Many parents believe that society views families with college-educated parents as having a more effective impact on their children's education and academic success (Erdener, 2014; Rawatlal & Petersen, 2012). Erdener pointed out that parents who are educated and well-versed in their communication with schools, experience proactive engagement with the teacher and principal (Erdener, 2014). Griffin and Galassi (2010) stressed the critical necessity between home and school, and no matter the education level of parents, all parents should be welcomed,

respected, and motivated to become involved in their child's academic achievement.

Unfortunately, contrasts in parents' educational level and income status continue to affect parental involvement factors from home to school (Rawatlal & Petersen, 2012). Moreover, Rawatlal and Petersen (2012) maintained that parents believe those who are educated, successful, and have high-income levels are more involved in their children's academic decisions, educational paths, and outcomes. Vellymalay (2012) stated that parents' personal difficulties within their families have remained an impediment that prevents them from being involved in school dynamics.

Similarly, Vellymalay (2012) urged that socioeconomic class, such as that of parents who are from low-income areas, lack school involvement due to poverty. Despite some of the dismal perceptions and barriers that impede parents' involvement in their children's schooling, parents are aware of the critical importance of parental involvement so that their children can succeed academically. However, on the other hand, parents still strongly assert that the child's school is the primary source of education, that the responsibility of education is on the education system, and that parental involvement efforts start with schools practicing a proactive perspective with parents.

Barriers to Parental Involvement

There are numerous impediments that directly affect parents and their efforts in facilitating effective parental involvement in their children's education and academic success. Although there is formidable data that demonstrates how schools and parents should work together, barriers that hinder parents from choosing to become involved in the educational feats of their children remain challenging (Uslu & Gizir, 2017). Keane (2016) pointed out that, theoretically, most parents are interested in involving themselves in their children's academic

world; however, the pessimistic connotations of parents remain, as the majority of the time, teachers are apathetic in putting forth the time and effort with parents. Any impediments that could very well prevent parents from purposefully desiring involvement in schools must be determined and examined so that affirmative relationships with school stakeholders can take place (Tosolt, 2010).

Parental attitudes are critical to involvement in schools so that children can succeed academically (Keane, 2016). Unfortunately, perceived barriers to parental involvement in school programs hinder forming partnerships between home and school (Griffin & Galassi, 2010). Much research shows that stakeholders have a responsibility to ensure that children are given all opportunities to be successful (Reece et al., 2013). However, family barriers such as parents' background, culture, race, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status, parenting and education beliefs (traditional and modernized), type of home life, lack of time, patience, and level of education can tremendously impact parental involvement and academic achievement (Chohan & Khan, 2010; Griffin & Galassi, 2010; Rawatlal & Petersen, 2012; Reece et al., 2013; Vellymalay, 2012).

Similarly, lack of daily, regimented parental home practices with children when homework is given; lack of awareness as to the importance of academic achievement; and lack of meaningful approaches to learning and motivating educational skills among children are other common impediments to parental involvement and academic success (Chohan & Khan, 2010; Griffin & Galassi, 2010; Rawatlal & Petersen, 2012; Reece et al., 2013; Tosolt, 2010; Vellymalay, 2012). Research also suggested additional barriers such as the frequency or infrequency of parent-child communication in the home, parents' attitudes about the school and teacher(s), one-parent households, and parents' job responsibilities and extended work hours

outside of the home tremendously impact the level of effective parental involvement (Jeynes, 2018). Despite the differences in parental factors and home life settings, similar challenges are sometimes found among proactive parents from these varying backgrounds as they strive to be involved in their children's schooling (Chohan & Khan, 2010; Epstein, 2018; Griffin & Galassi, 2010; Jeynes, 2018; Rawatlal & Petersen, 2012; Reece et al., 2013; Tosolt, 2010; Uslu & Gizir, 2017; Vellymalay, 2012). Parents who choose a role in their child's life as an extension of educating the child, typically are those parents who willingly engage in their child's school and forge positive interactions with teachers and other school personnel (Rawatlal & Petersen, 2012). However, in contrast, there are parents who choose not to be active in school or home involvement and only ensure that their child is brought to school (Jeynes, 2018).

Such a perspective was investigated by Chohan and Khan (2010). They surveyed and reported that some parents emphatically believe that it is unequivocally the sole responsibility of the school to educate their children. Such parental attitudes demonstrate that there is no obligation of being actively involved in their children's education (Chohan & Khan, 2010). Consequently, additional studies indicated the significance of parents' perspectives of where the responsibility is placed in relation to their children's education and enlist stakeholders in education to create strategies that will enable changing the mindset of those parents (Jeynes, 2018).

Another significant barrier that impacts parental involvement is the perception of parents feeling unwelcome or overlooked in becoming involved in the school (Okeke, 2014). Quite frequently, teachers are lackadaisical about involving parents or requesting family or parental volunteers rather than being proactive as teachers and seeking out parents who would feel motivated to get involved if simply asked (Okeke, 2014). Research shows that parents feel as if

they are not needed by their children's schools (Hornby, 2011). It was found that parents would rather experience feeling valued, wanted, and personally asked to be involved in their children's education rather than expectations that exist of them to get involved on their own (Brown et al., 2019). Similarly, parents of middle school students have the perception that children who seek more autonomy at the time of pre-adolescence and adolescent stages would prefer to ask their parents to get involved in school activities rather than have parents proactively and solely select school activities to encounter (Griffin & Galassi, 2010).

Hilado et al. (2013) maintained that when parents do not believe they should be held accountable for active involvement in the child's education, they are unlikely to be proactive in seeking out and communicating with the school. Therefore, the schools must be proactive in developing a rapport and partnership with the parents by inviting the parents to participate in their children's schooling (Hilado et al., 2013). When teachers are not actively collaborating with parents and enlisting parental participation, other barriers from parents are precipitated such as feelings of disconnect, isolation, dissatisfaction, and mistrust in the teacher and school (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). In addition, when school communication via emails and letters are sent out, and parents never receive the correspondence, this is seen as a persistent barrier to parental involvement. Hence, parents believe schools should remedy this barrier by developing more effective ways to collaborate and reach out to parents more effectively and efficiently (Griffin & Galassi, 2010).

Self-efficacy is another barrier to parental involvement and academic success. This factor is a critical entity when parents are determining whether they will involve themselves in their children's academics (Ardelt & Eccles, 2001; de Montigny & Lacharité, 2005; Hausman & Goldring, 2020; Holloway et al., 2016). However, researchers posited that a parent's decision to

involve themselves in their children's work is contingent upon high self-efficacy or feeling knowledgeable about their role in adequately helping the child (Ardelt & Eccles, 2001; de Montigny & Lacharité, 2005; Holloway et al., 2016; Jones & Prinz, 2005). Parents who encounter challenges of low self-efficacy experience barriers such as avoidance with schools, as these parents believe that being involved would not serve to be beneficial to their children.

According to Holloway et al. (2016), most barriers of self-efficacy that parents experience are their levels of education, previous educational endeavors, household composition, family structure, and various societal and economic experiences they may have had. These efficacy barriers impede the role parents can play in involving themselves in their children's school (Holloway et al., 2016). Sanders and Woolley (2005) found that parental self-efficacy and competence are critical variables in child achievement outcomes. Parents who demonstrate high levels of parental self-efficacy also show high levels of parental competence, which in turn gives way to favorable and successful developmental outcomes in their children. Parents who substantiated low parental self-efficacy participated in futile parenting behaviors which placed their children at risk of inferior developmental outcomes (Sanders & Woolley, 2005).

Researchers have also demonstrated that the reaction of teachers toward developing rapport with parents has created challenges with parental involvement in schools (Hornby, 2011). The beneficial outcome is typically centered around the parent serving as a positive, knowledgeable, resourceful extension of the school. As a result of this close connection and rapport-building with the teacher, the parent is more actively engaged in the academic success of their child (Hornby, 2011). However, the negative aspect of this parent-teacher relationship can take place when there are miscommunications such as when the parent may exercise a higher level of authority with the teacher in an academic matter; or the teacher may do so, as well

(Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017). When there are domineering patterns, personalities, and negative school encounters- this can create an impediment for future successful relationships at the school and affect the child's academic achievement due to the disharmony among both parties (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017).

Ethnicity/Diversity

The Department of Education reported that there is a heightened need for school personnel to understand diversity and become culturally sensitive with parents from diverse backgrounds (i.e., race, ethnicity, immigrant, refugee, bilingual parents) in an effort for teachers to understand and respect these families (Gartrell, 2013). Most barriers with parental involvement for culturally diverse parents are due to them not feeling that they can fit in or be included and connected in their children's academic life (Rapp & Duncan, 2012). Research has shown that teachers' lack of emotional intelligence and respect for cultural values among diverse parents presents difficulties for multicultural parents to involve themselves in school undertakings (Holloway et al., 2016).

Parents who endure economic barriers due to poverty are usually the least involved in their children's education (Vellymalay, 2012). Some barriers that impoverished parents experience include lack of transportation and little or no childcare assistance, which can prevent parents from attending school functions or volunteering, as they are unable to demonstrate involvement in their children's education due to economic obstacles. Attitudinal issues and harsh treatment from teachers magnify the barrier between schools and impoverished parents (Vellymalay, 2012).

Strategies for Engaging Parents Within Schools

Strategies for involving parents in their children's schools include teachers, staff, and administration establishing effective, sustainable relationships (Brown et al., 2009). Baker et al. (2016) supported the premise that parents should feel valued as teachers provide support. Encompassing readily available parenting workshops, training, and classes; effectively communicating with families, and developing interactive volunteer opportunities serve as motivational endeavors to foster parental involvement (Epstein, 2018). Brown et al. (2019) believed that scheduling home visits, creating supportive programming to promote learning at home, beginning cultural sensitivity training, and engaging in activities that increase parenting knowledge would promote involvement among parents.

Erdener (2014) posited that collaborating and partnering with the school while being instrumental in decision making, such as with the PTA, parental outreach such as open house, school board member affiliation, and networking with the community would further support parental involvement. Encouraging open discussions and forums for parents, making personal contacts to inactive parents, creating the buddy system by matching new parents with current active parents, and enlisting parents to volunteer, coach, and chaperone school outings would be beneficial for parents (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Hutchins, 2011; Jelas et al., 2016; Jeynes, 2018). Also, outsourcing with nearby organizations and local businesses to sponsor school initiatives and projects such as service learning for parents, parent education programs, and incentives such as gifts would create conducive parental engagement (Epstein, 2018).

Also, additional strategies that further promote parental engagement in schools specifically involve making proactive efforts to involve fathers (Epstein, 2018; Jeynes, 2018).

Offering school activities to attract and recruit fathers, such as painting, sports-related events, and games have been reported by school principals as an effective practice to increase parental involvement (Epstein, 2018). Park and Holloway (2017) found that applying classroom educational subjects to real-life has also helped parents and children enjoy learning opportunities together, thus enhancing student success. Providing recognition programs and assemblies can also create desired interest with children's parents so that they can attend and feel connected to the school and the success of their children (Epstein, 2018).

Epstein's Framework

Joyce Epstein's (2018) six types of parental involvement from the School-Home-Community Partnership of Overlapping Spheres of Influence is essential to this study. The spheres of influence focus on six essential components of parental involvement: parenting, learning at home, communication, decision-making, volunteering, and collaborating with the community. Epstein's framework of school, family, and community partnerships is a significant model used to analyze the relationship between schools, families, and communities as it relates to the success of the child (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017; Epstein, 2018).

Epstein's (2018) overlapping spheres of influence model signifies the relationships of the school, family, and community- thus enabling a child to be successful in school. Epstein (2018) affirmed that the child was the nucleus of the family, school, and community. The makeup of the overlapping spheres creates interactions and influences student learning, development, parent-school partnerships, and success by categorizing parental involvement via parenting activities; communicating activities; volunteering activities; learning at home activities; decision-making activities; and collaborating with the community (Epstein, 2018).

Epstein (2018) illustrated the following descriptions of parental involvement. Parenting activities depict schools having a heightened knowledge of families about the child's needs and interests and assist parents to fulfill parental responsibilities. Communicating activities indicate developing a clear, solidified partnership between families, particularly those who may have language or cultural differences and barriers. Communicative measures can involve connecting with parents through phone calls and correspondence by mail, email, or hand-delivery. Other methods of communication can be online or digital interactions, skype or zoom conferences between parents and teachers, as needed, and other online social media interactions for appropriate school marketing and community outreach to families (Epstein, 2018; Patrikakou, 2016).

Volunteering activities demonstrate encouragement among parents so that they can give of their time, skills, and talents to assist schools and classrooms. Volunteering—during school office hours, meetings, tutor programs, school programs, fundraisers, and student extracurricular activities—is pivotal to creating engagement in schools (Epstein, 2018). Learning-at-home activities guide parents to assist their children with homework and any educational planning. Such quality time allows parents to learn more about subject area assignments and other curricula-related dynamics with the child (Epstein, 2018).

Decision-making activities encourage and inform parents to become involved with information and decisions pertaining to educational programs in the near or distant future for their children. Parents can also be included in school decisions and develop themselves as leaders and school representatives with endeavors such as the PTA, school councils, and school advocacy and support groups.

Collaborating with community activities gives way to increasing networking and partnering efforts among schools, parents, families, businesses, organizations, community affiliates, agencies, and other resourceful entities to improve academic success and create an environment conducive to learning and a safe culture. Collaborating helps parents identify and integrate services, resources, and information within the community. It helps support, strengthen, and link the school to parents, youth, and families as well as to other services, programs, extracurricular activities, summer programs, and social, health, and learning components.

Past research and field studies have been instrumental in demonstrating the efficacy of Epstein's model to promote students' development and school and academic success by utilizing the six spheres of influence (Emeagwali, 2009; Ferlazzo, 2011; Salinas et al., 2009; Stacer & Perruci, 2012; Thompson et al., 2015). Other studies conducted have also measured and further validated how essential the six spheres have been in supporting parental involvement strategies in the schooling and academic success of children (Gordon & Louis, 2009; Hindin, 2010; Kimu & Steyn, 2013; The Parent Institute, 2012; Scott, 2011; Sheldon, 2009).

Correspondingly, Epstein networked with Dauber (1991/2016) to enlist and further support parental involvement as a factor of academic success. Epstein and Dauber showed that parental-school connections, such as parents' role in proactively rearing the child, helps prepare the child for the school year by ensuring empowering educational opportunities that foster growth and development throughout the child's academic school years. Also, Epstein and Dauber supported the role schools play in working with parents to ensure that the child is progressing academically and that consistent feedback about the child's academic achievements is provided.

Parental involvement such as parents visiting the school to provide support to their children in academic and extracurricular activities was also supported by Epstein and Dauber (1991/2016). Both affirmed that schools improve parental involvement by proposing flexible meeting and conference schedules to better accommodate more parents. Epstein and Dauber also maintained that parental involvement includes homework interaction with children and promoting learning activities through collaborative efforts with the school's teachers. This level of involvement promotes partnerships between the teachers and parents while helping both parties keep a record of the child's academic milestones and success. Epstein and Dauber indicated that collaborative organizations were the overall networking and efforts among parents, schools, and other stakeholders that have common interests in students' academic achievement by providing beneficial efforts separate from school efforts, events, or activities (i.e., health care, childcare, dental services).

Bronfenbrenner's Theory

To further support the conceptualization of parental involvement and academic success, Uri Bronfenbrenner (1979), an esteemed developmental psychologist, affirmed that effective and successful childhood outcomes should be a result of not only early intervention and strengths-based programming such as timely wrap-around support services for children and families but also focus on preventive social capital-building initiatives and involvement at the individual, parental, and community levels so that children are better academically prepared to achieve.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) educational platform also encompasses an understanding of how poverty impacts child development, mental health, and parental roles, responsibilities, and involvement in children's schools. From a collective perspective, the social capital theory was described by researchers with the objective that involvement, partnerships, collaborations, and

participation in social groups will yield positive results for the individual, group, or the community (Bourdieu, 1986; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Coleman, 1988; Hilado et al., 2013; Jeynes, 2018). Therefore, when parental involvement is prevalent in a school, it assists the parent with the school's expectations and initiates school-community cohesion whereby parents are partnering among themselves and with the school to improve the school climate.

Social capital is critical in developing relationships that create social support, parent-school connections, and ultimately bring about cooperation, participation, and positive involvement and outcomes for families, the educational system, and society as a whole. Such bonding is a form of social capital where parents or families can depend on others such as teachers for supportive partnerships and shared expectations of their children and the school environment (Putnam, 2001). As communities practice the concept of social capital, the achievement of a shared belief system is welcomed. Within the school system, parents who partner with teachers become more involved and informed about classroom and the school's plans in relation to the child's academic outlook and achievement. Consequently, this social capital partnership has reciprocity, as parents' expectations for their children's education is shared with the teachers (Davies & Rizk, 2018).

Social Capital

As social capital is practiced among educational stakeholders, influential power from institutions and their leaders such as within the educational school system takes place and can potentially strengthen schools by creating parental engagement and partnerships (Von Otter & Stenberg, 2015). When parents are cognizant and proactive with the child's teacher and principal, there is more decision-making power and support in developing and implementing school policies that positively impact their children (Erdener, 2014). When social capital is

gained, the health and well-being of stakeholders are improved (Jæger, 2011). Research confirms positive regard from adults' perceptions of parent-school relationships and the reward it presents to one's psychological well-being (Brown et al., 2019). Therefore, parents and children who have a strong system of support and involvement in the home and within the school community also demonstrate favorable mental and physical health outcomes that can in turn enhance academic achievement and success (Erdener, 2014).

In addition, researchers identified a linkage between social capital and the role of parents' health and well-being as they interact with teachers (Erdener, 2014). Parents who have established social rapports and partnerships with their children's teachers report improved and greater satisfaction and better overall health, social connections, networks, and a sense of community within the school and with other parents, as well (Carpiano, 2006). Current research shows that social capital impacted parents and children by the stress of low socioeconomic levels of poverty negatively impacting a parent's ability to handle challenges with parenting tasks such as parental engagement in their children's school (Erdener, 2014). Building relationships gives way to accessing social capital and ultimately leads to resources parents may need to strive for successful parent-child-school interactions and involvement, social support, and ultimately academic achievement. When there is heightened social capital that supports school communities, it produces higher academic achievement (Davies & Rizk, 2018).

According to Perna and Titus (2005), when parents and the community have more social capital, parents develop positive academic norms through mechanisms of social influence and feel comfortable advocating for their children. Parental involvement as a form of social capital is affirmatively linked to academic persistence among adolescents (Kisida et al., 2014). Jæger

(2011) pointed out that strong school-based relationships positively contribute to parental school engagement and achievement among adolescents.

Kisida et al. (2014) maintained that social capital-building efforts in schools can make a difference in the lives of individuals, families, and communities, collectively. By strengthening social ties and creating stronger communities, both parents and children succeed.

In terms of structural form, parent involvement typically can be thought of as involving dyadic or dual relationships between the parent, the child, and the teacher. A dyadic relationship between parents and teachers symbolizes an extended social network. Such extended networks are dimensions that give way to vital social capital to persons who are members of the network.

Another conceptualization of social capital is the existence and number of resources. This is also a clear example of where parent involvement fits within the social-capital construct. Parents have various levels of physical capital, human capital, and cultural capital to invest in their children. Furthermore, social capital is viewed as being beneficial from the parent's position in the social hierarchy. George's (2016) contention was on how other types of capital (i.e., human and cultural) are magnified by social capital. Andersen and Jæger (2015) focused on how parental involvement and networking with other parents is an important concept to convey to one's child that everyone is working together for the sake of the child's academic success and achievement.

Llamas and Tuazon (2016) asserted what is seen as direct parental involvement in the educational process (i.e., educational support practices). This element of parental involvement is a facet where educators seem to dedicate much of their attention to engage parents more fully in the child's academic life (Davies & Rizk, 2018; Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Llamas & Tuazon, 2016; Marschall & Shah, 2016). This concept is more monumental for academic performance to

be obtained, as it may impact many elements of the educational process (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). For example, direct parental involvement shifts parents into more active involvement with their children in education and knowing that the parent is actively involved convinces teachers to invest greater attention and energy into these children, specifically (Wittkowski et al., 2017). However, this aspect of parental involvement is also likely to be the most reactive, since many parents are likely to get involved directly in their child's school only if their child has experienced difficulties at the school (Jæger, 2011). This is particularly accurate since the measures used to utilize this concept include whether parents attended a school meeting, communicated with a teacher or counselor, or visited the child's classes (Baharudin et al., 2010).

According to McNeal (2014), there are various aspects to heighten parental involvement in schools such as by engaging in school undertakings; parents can enhance abilities to work more effectively with their children and readily assist in school programs and events. As Harris and Robinson (2016) pointed out, parents with adolescent-aged children should establish a good rapport with schoolteachers, guidance counselors, deans of students, and school administrators. This helps provide information such as the school's expectations regarding tests, examinations, grades, academic expectations, conduct, and other beneficial school agendas. When parents participate in school activities, events, and conferences- they have an opportunity to engage with other parents; discuss challenges; speak about the academic accomplishments, achievements, and successes of their children; and exchange information to keep in touch with one another (McNeal, 2014).

Social control can also impact the success of parental involvement and academic achievement because of the appropriate behaviors (i.e., norms, values) that are to be taught both inside and outside of the classroom (Harris & Robinson, 2016). For example, when children

receive synonymous directives from both parents and teachers (social control) in relation to school, classwork, behavior, or homework, they will clearly follow those instructions. Therefore, students receive engaging dialogue and interaction from parents and teachers about school importance, social capital, and social control, as this promotes children's capabilities, motivation to learn, positive feelings about school, and interest to succeed academically (McNeal, 2014). Hence, parents and teachers are the two most critical educators in a child's life (Keane, 2016; Kim & Bryan, 2017; Snell et al., 2018; Uslu & Gizir, 2017).

Parental involvement should also demonstrate consistently participating in school meetings, contacting teachers via email or by telephone, helping children in the home environment, and being visible for the sake of the child (George, 2016). Parental involvement's critical nature impacts children's lives, particularly during middle school years (McNeal, 2014). Scientists found that parental involvement greatly impacts children's academic progress, behavior, language and social skills, and their view of life when they reach adolescence (McNeal, 2014). However, Marschall and Shah (2016) noted that parents are becoming less engaged in the academic process of their children. Issues can be solved by parents' willingness and understandings of the importance of their involvement (George, 2016).

For example, Bracke and Corts (2012) found that when parents of children entering middle school for the first time have the desire to involve themselves in their children's school activities, it can help the child make a more favorable transition from elementary school to middle school and yield better academic outcomes. When parents have established a good working relationship with teachers and the results are favorable as to the effects the parental involvement has on children's academic success, parents' motivation continues to strengthen and heighten to the latter grade levels, as well (Brown et al., 2019).

Assalahi (2015) purported that children tend to evolve and thrive academically in closer-knit communities. Research shows that in communities where individuals have trust, parents can help one another by assisting one another with their children. As parents get to know one another and get acquainted with one another's children, it fosters a sense of community and motivation, thereby prompting effective measures in supporting one another to get involved in their children's school (Brown et al., 2019; Rosen, 2013). When parents and children within one's community form relationships and rapports, familiar norms, motivation, and expectations about rules and discipline are practiced, which in turn augment positive and successful academic, social, mental, and behavioral outcomes for children (Hilado et al., 2013; McNeal, 2014; Park & Holloway, 2017).

Also, when there is such social capital from parents and the community, parents develop positive academic social influence and become more involved in advocating for their children (McNeal, 2014). Research points out that parental involvement as a form of this type of social capital will continue to positively contribute to school engagement and achievement among children (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017). Kisida et al. (2014) reported that efforts of social capital building will continue to strengthen and make a difference in the lives of parents, children, families, and communities.

Additionally, as an alternative framework to assist in the concept of parental involvement in academic success, Perry and Langley utilized Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior (TPB; as cited in Perry & Langley, 2013). They asserted that TPB is multifaceted enough to constitute the nature of parental engagement. Perry and Langley's theory, influenced by TPB, offers an explanation of the motivation for parental involvement and the factors that impact parents' varying degrees of involvement.

The TPB theory sets the premise for observing individuals' positive behaviors whereby intentional behavior is determined and modeled by attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, norms, and perceived controls that may impact parental involvement and explain different facets to parents being involved in their children's schooling. The focus of TPB is on the influence of subjective beliefs, motivation, and involvement that parents should have to ensure their children's academic success (Perry & Langley, 2013). Such subjective norms stem from parents' cultures such as having role models and mentors who are involved in their children's education and promote academic achievement (Bracke & Corts, 2012).

Summary and Preview of Chapter 3

Research continues to strongly indicate that students who receive parental involvement in their education experience favorable academic outcomes over those whose parents are not involved. From the beginning of the colonial American eras, the educational system displayed the critical importance of parental involvement in relation to academic success. Joyce Epstein's six types of engagement serve as the pillars to successful parental involvement that lead to success among students. As such, the information presented in this research provides a framework to decipher the importance of parental involvement in relation to academic success and how schools must connect with parents to create an educational culture that facilitates engagement, achievement, and sustainability.

This literature review demonstrated how educators have evolved during a period spanning over 300 years. This chapter also focused on the transitions, transformations, and perspectives of education and parental involvement in America. Also, Chapter 2 provided theorists' perspectives, various types of parental involvement, and the strategies each framework depicts that bring about parental involvement that cultivates academic success among children.

Chapter 3 provides and describes the research design and detailed methods of the study. The information in Chapter 3 also includes the appropriate population, its qualitative sample size, materials, data collection, analysis procedures, the researcher's role, ethical considerations, limitations, and delimitations of the study with a concluding summary.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this case study was to examine the perspectives of parents, teachers, and administrators in relation to parental involvement and academic success in a Georgia middle school. This study examined the roles and perceptions of parents and educators in relation to student success and identified strategies that enhance parental involvement. This chapter focuses on an overview of the problem and purpose, research questions, research design, and method, population, qualitative sampling, qualitative data collection and analysis procedures, the role of the researcher, ethical considerations, limitations, delimitations, and summary.

As a result of the review in Chapter 2, research has shown a positive and consistent correlation between parental involvement and a child's academic success. Schools and parents must play an integral part in working collaboratively to enhance the child's academic life in the home and at school, form strong partnerships and positive school experiences, and promote academic success (Epstein, 2018). Schools must be held accountable in assisting parents and families to form alliances within the school community and interact and engage in students' education (Epstein, 2018). Cheung and Pomerantz (2012) supported the necessity of parental interactions within the school community and its ability to strengthen academic success among students.

Unfortunately, too many schools remain disconnected with parents and have not successfully developed conducive environments and successful, enrichment-filled, sustainable parental resources to enable parents to become actively involved in school functions to help enhance academic achievement among their children (Chohan & Khan, 2010; Epstein, 2018; Griffin & Galassi, 2010; Rawatlal & Petersen, 2012; Reece et al., 2013; Tosolt, 2010; Vellymalay, 2012). This research is prepared to guide parents and educators in creating

sustainable partnerships. The chapter describes the study's participants, materials and instruments, data collection and procedures, and data analysis.

Research Questions

Q1. How do parents and schools define parental involvement?

Q2. In what ways do parents, teachers, and administrators collectively collaborate to promote parental involvement and foster academic success among students?

Q3. What are the barriers that impede parental involvement in the student's school life?

Q4. Which best practices contribute to higher levels of parental involvement among parents and schools?

Research Design and Method

I chose a single case study research design to examine parents' beliefs of their impact and role on academic success. Using qualitative research, I obtained useful information as to how parents interpret and clarify their experiences, how they construct their world and home life, and what aspects they utilize to connect to their parental experiences within a school setting. In addition, one of the advantages of a qualitative approach is that there can be a discovery and portrayal of the reality of the participants. In this study, I conducted research to explore parental involvement at a Georgia County public middle school.

The purpose of concentrating on a single issue was to reveal the commonalities of the characteristics of the occurrence (Assalahi, 2015). Baxter and Jack (2008) pointed out a similar perspective to Assalahi (2015), viewing a case study as a research design to be utilized in small-scale studies that focus on individual studies, to be investigated in-depth. This single case study generated a detailed understanding of the exploration and interpretation of the topic from a real-life perspective (Creswell, 2017). The qualitative case study design of my research analyzed

parents' perceptions of their role in the educational process. Creswell (2017) emphasized that a qualitative research design is a way to explore and understand the concept individuals or groups connect to a social or human problem and interpret personal experiences. A case study gives researchers a holistic illustration of events.

In case study, I examined participants who were involved (i.e., the parents and school personnel) at the middle school. A qualitative case study is defined as an impactful study of an event close to individuals (Brown et al., 2009). Through this case study, a more comprehensive understanding of parental involvement and academic success was established. In addition, results of this case study provided more realistic knowledge and insight into the role of parental involvement and academic success. According to Snell et al. (2018), a qualitative case study demonstrates the exploration of the event by its data sources.

Parent and teacher participants of this study were asked to sign a consent form indicating their agreement to participate in semistructured interviews at the school. Administrators were asked to consent to participating in a focus group at the school. Each semistructured interview and focus group addressed parental involvement in relation to academic success and strategies that support and strengthen parental involvement in schools.

Population

The population for this single case study consisted of 6-8 grade middle school personnel and parents located in a suburban Georgia school district during the 2019-2020 academic school year. This school was in a residential suburban area in Georgia, with a population of 973 students, whereby 5.19% were Asian; 14.8% were African American; 10.0% were Hispanic; 0.10% were Hawaiian/Pacific Islander; 0.10% were American Indian/Alaskan; 66.57% were White (non-Hispanic); and 3.06% were two or more races (Fulton County Schools, 2018). The

parent population consisted of parents with children attending school in the school district, grades 6–8. From a total of 18 parents interviewed, one was Vietnamese; four were Black; one was Hispanic; two were Indian; and 10 were White. The administrators' focus group consisted of two Whites and one Latino. For teachers being interviewed, there were three participants. To protect the privacy of participants, pseudonyms were used as a descriptor to denote participants.

Sample

I used a purposeful sampling technique to collect useful data and information for the study (Etikan et al., 2016). Once the desired middle school provided written approval to allow the research to be conducted, the study began. The sample size included 18 parents of middle school students, six from each grade level (grades six through eight); three teachers (teachers who were identified by the principal as active members or representatives of School A's PTA or mentors of the Fulton County middle school's home-school involvement and family engagement programs), and three administrators (i.e., principal, assistant principal, superintendent, assistant superintendent, or dean of students). Parents purposefully selected were from varying socioeconomic statuses, race/ethnicity, cultural, and social backgrounds- including education, occupation, household income, place of residence, and if receiving free or reduced lunch. The school principal recommended teachers assist in the recruitment process of parents.

Ritchie et al. (2013) indicated that within qualitative research, there is a small sample size, as occurrences only need to emerge once to connect to the analytical representation. Within the sample size of parents and school personnel, a point of diminishing return or data saturation may take place when increasing the sample size no longer contributes to new evidence and demonstrates that the data collection process is complete or near completion (Ritchie et al., 2013). When undertaking this research, the sample size chosen was supported by the need to

discover all the main developments within the approach and conditions at the school. Similarly, the perspective of Creswell (2017) in relation to the qualitative sample size of parents and school personnel is to study a limited number of individuals or a few cases to obtain data saturation.

Classroom teachers identified and referred 18 parents in their children's school. Highly involved parents identified consisted of parents who attend school meetings; schedule parent-teacher conferences about their children's academic concerns, goals, and success; and attend school events, assemblies, ceremonies, and extracurricular activities. Uninvolved parents were identified by teachers as those who have encountered cultural, socioeconomic, and educational barriers and who are considered to be disengaged with the school, as they do not attend school events; conferences; do not keep scheduled school meetings or appointments; and do not respond to notes or emails from teachers and other personnel to discuss their children's academic concerns, goals, and success. Such uninvolved parents rarely attend or do not choose to engage in school assemblies, extracurricular activities, classroom activities, or award ceremonies. Teachers identified such uninvolved parents from the school's experiences due to a lack of responsiveness from parents.

Such purposeful sampling selections demonstrated what Creswell (2017) believed to be a method commonly used in qualitative research to identify and select individuals who are particularly well-suited and skilled about a specific interest, phenomenon, or topic. Further, these individuals or groups had a willingness to take part in the exchange and disseminate information about their experiences in relation to the topic. According to Jamshed (2014), by adopting a qualitative methodology, a researcher integrates preconceived ideas as well as projects the thought process through focus groups and interviews. The researcher analyzes and examines the challenges from a comprehensive perspective. Also—as with all factors of qualitative research—

quite frequently, when the quantity of the data is small, the depth or quality of that data is more vital than having large numbers (Burmeister & Aitken, 2012).

For this study, I developed and facilitated one focus group an—administrative focus group. The administrative focus group was conducted in the principal's office area of the Alpharetta, Georgia, public middle school. Individual parent and teacher interviews were conducted in private classroom areas of the middle school. The focus group met one time for a 90-minute session. The focus group was designed to build and reflect upon one another's responses to questions asked and to gather the necessary feedback from an administrative perspective (Creswell, 2017). This study's focus group provided qualitative data to help understand educators' perspectives in relation to the impact of parental involvement strategies on academic success and what is needed at the school to promote parental involvement.

A meeting with the middle school principal was held to discuss the study in detail. Shortly thereafter, a letter to seek approval to conduct the study was completed, along with consent and confidentiality forms. Field testing was conducted in the school office whereby one teacher, one parent, and two administrators reviewed, ensured, and approved the appropriateness of the items and questions included for each interview. Field testing was conducted in this manner so that I could gather adequate information from a sample of the participants and gather critical information to assist in improving the interview questions chosen (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Following the approval of the participants' interview items, the participants received, reviewed, and signed consent forms to participate in this qualitative study. The research participants consisted of 18 parents of sixth–eighth grade students. After permission to conduct the study was granted, and participants were purposefully selected, interview areas within the

classrooms were made available. One-hour individual interview sessions were conducted with parent participants, and data were collected, recorded, and stored in a secure file.

Creswell (2017) distinguished that such a qualitative research design helps to comprehend the way people view social challenges. The participants in this study helped the educational system in the school district explore and analyze perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators to obtain a greater understanding for better parent-school outcomes.

Parents' individual semistructured interviews were utilized as one instrument for this study (see Appendix A). Teachers' individual interviews were also utilized (see Appendix B). In addition, Appendix C contains administrators focus group questions. The socioeconomic levels of this study's parental participants ensured conceptual saturation.

Prior to the study commencing, I made a written request to the school, followed by a verbal follow-up to administrative school personnel. After permission to conduct the study was granted, participants were purposefully selected and rooms for interviews and the focus group discussion were made available. All participants' responses were recorded and transcribed. Interview questions were formulated to identify parents' and teachers' perspectives. Focus group questions and responses from administrators gave way for others to gain an understanding (Creswell, 2017) of stakeholders' perspectives and the need for effective, strong, sustainable parent-school partnerships.

Materials/Instruments

In this research, the instruments consisted of interviews and focus group discussions to gather qualitative data to better understand parents' and educators' perspectives. Therefore, in the context of this investigation, the study approach included parents and school personnel of a public middle school in Georgia. This case study design focused on holistic descriptions of a

real-life framework (Creswell, 2017). For instrumentation purposes, individual semistructured interviews were implemented for parents (see Appendix A). A set of interviews was conducted with teachers (see Appendix B). A focus group was developed among school administrators (see Appendix C). Parents were provided responses to the types of involvement they demonstrate for their children and the role the school plays in providing parents with the necessary resources that can initiate a parent-school partnership and influence academic success. The parents' interviews were designed to measure how the school collaborates and involves parents with the child's educational goals. Interviews with teachers and focus groups among administrators were utilized to guide improvement efforts, initiate planning, and identify the types of parental involvement support each stakeholder has determined is vital in promoting academic success. Teachers were interviewed to establish their level of school and classroom contributions in making impactful decisions and providing parents with strategies to help children in school-related activities and encourage learning at home. The teachers' interviews were designed to demonstrate how teachers and the school involve parents in supportive, effective, and purposeful ways.

In this study, I utilized a semistructured format to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role and impact of parents in their children's schools. The interviews provided the parents a platform to express their values, beliefs, thoughts, feelings, and needs, and to provide feedback to enhance and create collaborative partnerships in middle schools. During the parental interviews, fifteen questions to each participant were asked; ten questions were asked of teachers; and 12 questions were asked of the administrators' focus group. Focus groups and interviews provided a trajectory to probe for more information and feedback from parents and school personnel. Gill et al., (2008) believed that eliciting feedback from participants demonstrates invaluable questions that help to alleviate the areas that need to be examined. Such

that, this gives the interviewer and participants the freedom and flexibility of an open forum and to digress from questions so that she/he may analyze or explore for more considerations.

Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

A data collection protocol for the organization of a focus group and interviews was implemented. Open-ended questions were asked to allow the group of participants to fully express themselves with each of their responses, as Creswell (2017) believed open-ended questions and responses provide creativity in the group participants' statements. Proper notification procedures were utilized to ensure adequate participation for my research.

Following the completion of the focus group discussion and interviews with all participants, data analysis began. Reflective notes were also part of the interview documentation. Interviews and focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed. The data analysis process began by examining the data collected from the focus group and interviews. A color-coding process (lean coding) was utilized to assist in categorizing the data (Creswell, 2017). To protect each participant, pseudonyms were utilized to provide some information about the participants involved in the study. In addition, I provided and discussed background information as to why the study is relevant, critical, and its influence. The data from the recordings were analyzed using data reduction. Punch and Onacea (2014) purported that data reduction encompasses editing, grouping, and summarizing and takes place during the preliminary phases of the study so there is a reduction without losing important information.

The categories to be utilized following data reduction included areas of Epstein's conceptual framework, such as: parenting and personal feedback, communication, support, respect, relationships, partnering, and volunteer opportunities, development, and homework. Themes and patterns were developed to help analyze the data from the participants' responses

and any commonalities evident during the interviews. Punch and Onacea (2014) suggest that qualitative data in a matrix is recommended to prevent immense, vast qualitative data. Miles and Huberman (2002) addressed two main types of codes, descriptive and pattern. Therefore, the keywords and pivotal responses from the participants' interviews were coded with themes and patterns. According to Hatch (2002), data analysis creates a format to utilize and organize the data, identify themes, explore communications, and interpret findings. Therefore, themes and data were cross-referenced with the findings. The pattern codes used in qualitative research such as important short phrases or symbolic word patterns helped interpret the data (Saldaña, 2015).

Methods for Establishing Trustworthiness

Creswell's (2017) six-step model (i.e., developing the research paradigm, choosing sampling techniques, selecting participants, collecting the data through interviews, observing, recording, and transcribing any field notes of parents and school personnel) was utilized to analyze the data revealed in this study, ensuring its validity and credibility (Creswell, 2017).

Researcher's Role

I am accounting for my role in this study as an educator and a parent, as Creswell (2017) affirmed that researchers create their perspectives from experiences. Moreover, my role as the researcher in this study emanates from my personal history as an engaged teacher with my students and with my parents and as an engaged, very involved mother with my daughter's successful academic career. Hence, I bring to this study a personal fondness and awareness of the importance of parental involvement on academic success. I have continued to challenge myself and remain open to exploring any hidden biases that are necessary to recognize as an educator, as everyone is vulnerable to biases in various settings.

My role during this study was to strive toward and ensure fairness, support, and impartiality and strengthen my being against practicing any implicit or explicit biases as an educator and work harder toward objectively and fairly viewing all parents' perspectives. Despite values and beliefs in relation to this study, I welcomed those persons' ideas and ideals so that they may have a platform to speak about their own personal accounts and experiences as parents and what they deem important in their children's lives.

Ethical Considerations

Guidelines were followed that have been set forth by Abilene Christian University's (ACU) Institutional Review Board (IRB). Confidentiality of all data, IRB requirements, ethical guidelines, and full disclosure to participants as it relates to this study were provided and followed. To further establish trustworthiness, research integrity, and assurance- all data remained organized, securely locked, stored, protected, and confidential and is also securely stored by Abilene Christian University.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Saldaña (2015) believed that research is contingent upon the skillset of the researcher and can be impacted by biases. One assumption that could have restricted a study of this magnitude was commitment among parents who participated. Parent participants reserved the right to withdraw from the study if they chose or if they chose not to fully commit to the entirety of the study. Jassi and Ordonez-Jasi (2012) posited that parents and educators view parental involvement differently. As a result, educators may not understand why there is little parental involvement in specific schools. However, numerous parents have asserted that their involvement and opinions were not welcomed by school leaders. Therefore, if parent participants

chose to decide to involve themselves, but with reluctance and uncertainties about their opinions, the efficacy of this study could have been impeded.

Another assumption of this study consisted of the challenges that prevent parents who choose to participate but who cannot due to barriers. Issues, such as parent's work responsibilities, schedules, cultural problems, technological barriers, and disenfranchisement—due to minimal or no involvement from working parents—can be challenging. When parents do not participate, due to parental demands and responsibilities, it could limit the study's effectiveness since its primary focus is to enhance parental involvement.

Another assumption to this study indicated how teachers and administrators chosen to participate had not fully involved themselves due to the current absence or lack of parental involvement with some of the parents at the school. McCaleb (2013) stated that teachers and school administrators in some schools are unsure about involving parents due to previous and current unfavorable experiences and misunderstandings with parents. As a result, previous research has shown that some teachers and administrators have waived their participation in similar studies. Such educators have felt that such projects are a waste of time. Such lack of participation can hinder the success of the study.

In addition, another assumption included participants potentially having various levels of familiarity about the topic of parental involvement. It is also assumed that educators (i.e., teachers, school administrators) had a higher skill set about the topic of parental involvement and academic success.

Limitations included small sizes of each group of recruited participants, the location of only collecting data at one school, the choice of recruiting only one school district, and the decision to select parents and teachers from only three grade levels of children (6-8 grade) rather

than numerous grade levels. This study produced results that did not influence a wide realm of individuals.

The delimitations of this research were evident from the criteria necessary for participation in the study. This study was comprised of only parents and school personnel who were affiliated with a specific middle school in Georgia. The participants of this study also consisted of small quantities of parents and educators. Interviews with only parents of middle school children attending the school and its administrators took place.

Summary

This qualitative case study explored parents' perspectives about the role of parental involvement, its importance in academic success, and developed strategies to enhance parental involvement in schools. Before data collection began, ethical considerations were in place to protect all participants. Data collection involved interviews from 18 parents, three teachers from varying middle-grade school levels and subjects taught, and a focus group of three school administrators. The data collection assisted the school and parents to create collaborative partnerships and reach a clearer path forward of effectively developing, utilizing, and sustaining parental involvement programs that can ultimately produce academic success in students. Chapter 4 presents the data analysis and the findings of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter presents the data analysis and findings of the research study. The purpose of this case study was to identify the perceptions of middle school parents, teachers, and administrators to gain a better understanding of their role in relation to school partnership strategies. The analyses address perspectives of parents, teachers, and administrators on the parent-school partnership strategies for academic success. Full insight was accomplished by addressing the following research questions to guide this study.

Q1. How do parents and schools define parental involvement?

Q2. In what ways do parents, teachers, and administrators collectively collaborate to enhance parental involvement and foster academic success among students?

Q3. What are the barriers that impede parental involvement in the student's school life?

Q4. Which best practices contribute to higher levels of parental involvement among parents and schools?

Qualitative data analysis or coding of transcripts was chosen as the most appropriate model to analyze the data. Saldaña (2015) defined “coding” as “essence-capturing and evocative attributes for a portion of language-based and visual data” (p. 3). Saldaña (2015) pointed out that the utilization of computer software programs creates limitations to the analysis of qualitative data, and coding is the best method when analyzing numerous interviews. Saldaña (2015) affirmed that software programs are effective when the tabulation of words and phrases is only needed. Such programs do not serve well in substituting for the researcher's approach in identifying accurate perspectives, beliefs, and complex ideas in transcripts as coding does (Saldaña, 2015). Coding offers to the researcher a personal, rational reasoning from the interviews conducted and a more precise method of conveying logical perspectives. Miles (2019)

and Saldaña (2015) both noted that the researcher is dutifully competent at discovering complex themes, beliefs, expressions, ideas, and natural meaning units of the participants from the text as opposed to a computer software program. Further, content analysis from the interviews was utilized to disseminate emerging themes congruent to Epstein's (2018) six types of parental involvement (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community). Open-ended, personal, qualitative responses served as the protocol for all interviews among parents and school personnel. The questions designed addressed any challenges to parental involvement at home and school and established what practices are necessary to cultivate parent-school partnerships based on Epstein's model (2018).

The interview questions also provided parents' and school personnel opinions of what parental involvement practices are needed at the middle school. Sections in this chapter include interview response rates, summary of qualitative findings, and qualitative analysis.

Interview Response Rates

Semistructured interviews were conducted with 18 parents (six from sixth-grade middle school students, six from seventh-grade middle school students, and six from eighth-grade middle school students); three teachers; and three administrative personnel of a Georgia middle school. To protect the identity of the participants, each parent was assigned a pseudonym from parent 1 to parent 18. The three teacher participants were given a pseudonym from Teacher 1 through Teacher 3 and administrators, Administrator 1 to Administrator 3. The overall response rate is shown in Table 1.

Table 1*Overall Interview Response*

Interviews Requested from Parents	Parent Interviews Conducted	Interviews Requested from School Personnel: Teachers and Administrators	School Personnel Interviews Conducted: Teachers and Administrators	Response Rate
18	18	6	6	100%

I reviewed the middle school's policies on the website and asked the school administration to request interviews from parents, teachers, and administrators to determine their perceptions and practices of parent-school partnership strategies in academic success. Following approval of the IRB (Appendix D), I received approval from the school principal to recruit (Appendix E) and conduct interviews with parents, teachers, and administrators to collect information in relation to perceptions of parental involvement and parent-school partnerships within the middle school. Interview questions had been carefully constructed for all interviews; however, some questions were modified during the interview process to present comfortable conversations during the interviews.

I recorded all interviews were recorded with an audio recording device and later transcribed. After each interview, I took notes to allow additional information to be utilized that may not have been from the audio recordings. The coding process proved to be helpful in identifying common ideas and themes from participants' responses.

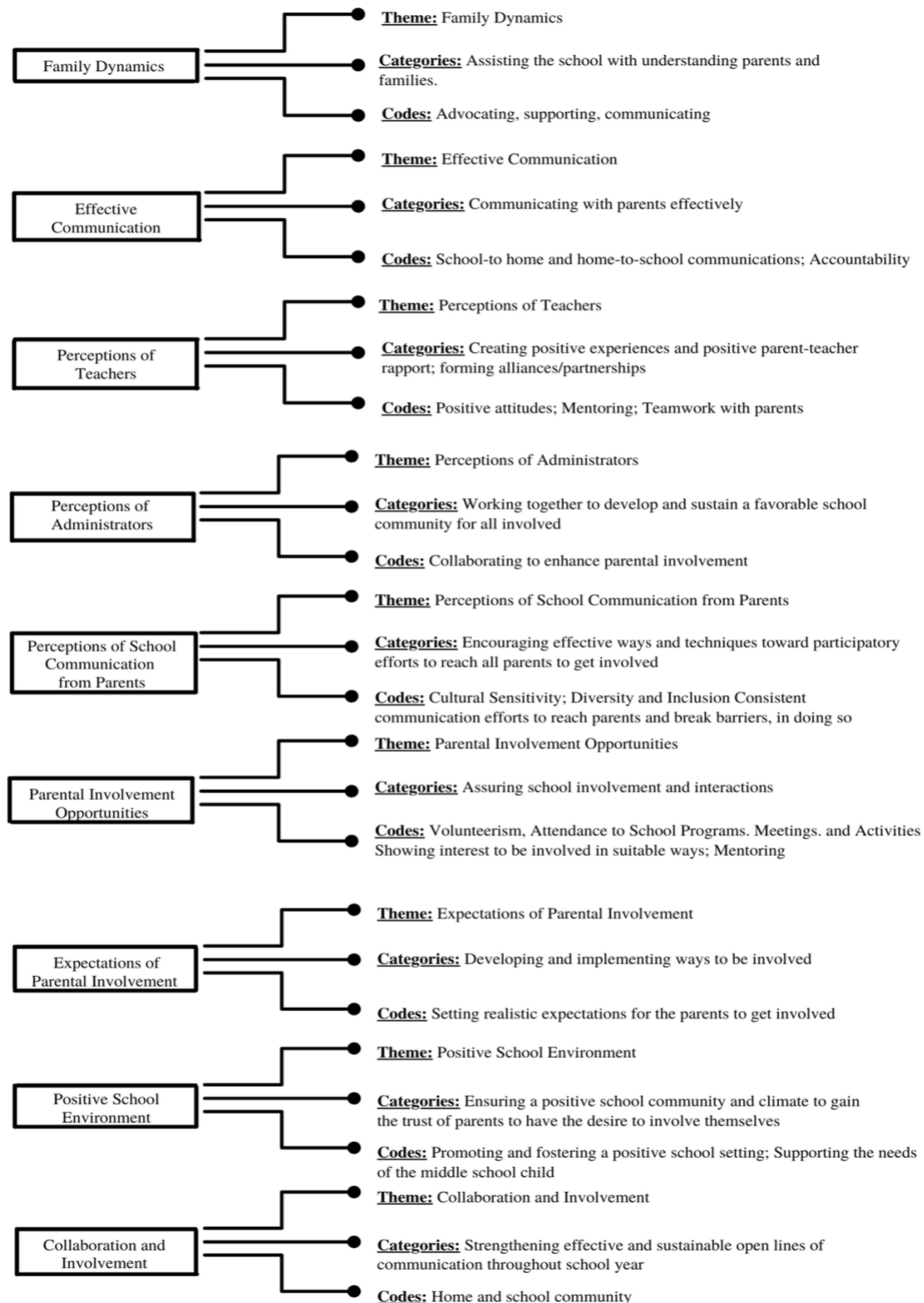
The semistructured individual interviews were designed to include varying questions. The coding I created gave way to Epstein's (2018) framework for the six critical types of involvement (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, collaborating with the community) that strengthen parent-school partnerships. Disseminating

parents' needs for their child's school creates a better understanding of the most vital types of involvement from Epstein's framework by which the school must concentrate and strengthen.

In a like manner to the individual parent and teacher interviews, a focus group interview session with school administrators (the principal, assistant principal, and dean of students) was conducted to gain perspective from these stakeholders. According to Creswell (2017), focus groups work well in providing information from participants that cannot be fully accomplished by some individual interviews.

Once data were collected from the interviews, the analysis process began. Following the audio recordings, transcriptions of interviews took place. All transcripts were reviewed alongside the audio recordings and my research notes. All interviews were checked for accuracy by repeating the same process for each. Theoretical coding of data began by finding pivotal concepts and principles of the case study. I underlined each fundamental keyword that demonstrated the message that the participant conveyed. Such organization helped to establish a working analytical framework. Much of the underlined words matched synonymously to that of Epstein's six types of parental involvement. Further, I color-coded words with highlighters and creative symbols to indicate patterns and categories discovered. The codes were then grouped into categories to have a distinct theoretical framework from the interviews.

As codes were discovered from each interview, I identified them. Data were recorded and coded. After conducting an analysis of the interview transcripts, several themes appeared interwoven and interspersed within all the interviews. The coding consisted of a list of terms and phrases from the interviews. Words and phrases were then grouped by commonalities. Themes and codes that emerged from the interviews are listed in Figure 1.

Figure 1*Codes for Emerging Themes*

After developing the coding, I examined and interpreted the data by referencing the aspects of each group. As a result of this approach, my themes from the data were created. I chose to utilize the constant comparative method (Miles, 2019) to compare specific events from the data and fine-tune the concepts, break down their properties, examine the commonalities to one another, and integrate them into a model with a goal to explain the processes under study. Prior to a new code being established and concepts developed, data from similar interviews were cross-referenced. While comparing the data, additional categories were found. Once data saturation was reached, comparisons were discontinued.

Themes From the Findings

My main focus of the study's themes and collective statements from participants was from the constant comparative method by Glaser and Strauss (1967/2017), which in turn, helped to effectively answer the research questions. Such themes included: parenting dynamics and perceptions of involvement; effective communication between home, parents, and school; positive perceptions among teachers; positive perceptions among administrators; parental involvement opportunities; parental involvement expectations; positive school environment; supportive networking and collaborative efforts among the school's community; promoting communication; and enhancing parental involvement and collaborative efforts. The next section provides an overview of each of the aforementioned themes established from the interviews.

Theme 1. Family Dynamics at Their Child's School

Eight parents expressed family dynamics and family-oriented type experiences at their child's school. Parent 1 advocated the aspect of family by stating:

There is a good feeling I have had with the school since my children started here in terms of the school officials advocating for families to be involved in school activities and

promoting the idea, no matter if our children want us involved or not due to them transitioning from elementary to middle school. It has been a really good balance with family members here and the teachers encouraging involvement, and we've been here since my oldest started here for middle school from the 6th grade up to this point.

Similar responses about family dynamics playing an integral part were also stated by Parent 2:

The school has felt like home to us, and we feel good about having our son here because most of the teachers, his classmates, and classes are like one happy family, and the size of the school—with most of us knowing one another—is such a good feeling.

Parent 3 mentioned that her daughter references her peers at school as her “other family.” Parent 3 said:

We feel comfortable and happy knowing this because middle school can be tough, and other parents I talk to have a few problems here and there with school issues; but for the most part, our kids are happy about the homey feeling that they get from their teachers, especially in certain classes and subjects. They enjoy the coaches and how much they care about them. This makes the atmosphere at school better; more positive for our child and us, as parents, because the way I see it, my child is spending a lot of time [here]—more time at school than at home—so a family environment at this school is great.

Parent 4 shared the feeling of “community” with the classes but felt like the school atmosphere needs some fine-tuning:

Some parents still feel excluded and so do their kids due to them being newcomers at the school. I have spoken to some of them, and they feel left out because they didn't start their child here and it's almost like they feel their child is being punished for not starting at the school from the beginning of the middle school in the 6th grade.

Parent 5 was one of those parents who felt that way:

Although there is a sense of community, there are cliques because it is such a small community (and even a smaller community of minority groups here) and some of us feel left out at times; then, all of a sudden, accepted; then back to feeling alienated. My child likes it here but comes home and sometimes will bring up how sometimes she feels left out, excluded, or out of place because the other classmates have known one another longer and have also known the teachers longer and that's the part of this school that I'd like to see change, and it takes the teachers and the principal to work on promoting a family-type, encouraging, and welcoming atmosphere so all of our children can have a place and feel comfortable at school all of the time, not just some of the time.

Parent 6 made mention of how families (parents) are encouraged to come eat with their middle schoolers for the school's big Fall Feast/Fall Festival that they host in the cafeteria. Parent 6 stated:

Because of varying cultures at this school, it isn't called Thanksgiving, but it really is like a Thanksgiving dinner, and it really shows how family-oriented the school is when we attend the Fall Festival and Feast. The teachers know all the students by name, and it is so nice to observe the closeness and family-type atmosphere the school, the teachers, the office people, and even the cafeteria workers have with our children. Everyone seems involved. It's just up to us to show up for things like this at the school.

Parent 7 talked about Open House at their child's school and stated:

The teachers really have their classrooms so beautiful and well-prepared and motivate the entire family to come to Open House so that they can have a full picture of our families and who is involved in our children's lives.

The additional parents shared synonymous statements as they also felt that to be involved, parents must take time out of their schedules to show up to the school—as the school is doing its part to recruit and welcome parents. Parent 8 voiced her perspective about family dynamics:

I have learned a lot about the school's sense of community over the years since both my son and daughter attend school here. I really appreciate how the teachers are helpful when family issues come up, and you really feel that sense of community and care and love for our children from the teachers. They really encourage the students when academic issues come up and are helpful in encouraging us, as parents. We don't feel isolated or alone when it comes to our children struggling with issues at the school, and that makes a difference when we have the help from the school.

Nine of the 18 parents are involved and attended school events, meetings, and activities six or more times. Conversely, the other nine parents attended school events, meetings, and activities less than six times during the school year.

Theme 2. Effective Communication Between Home, Parents, and School

Each of the participants in the interview portion of the study expressed the importance of school and parental communication. This theme was most prevalent among all participants throughout the study. Schools are viewed as being accountable for initiating effective communication to parents, and such a premise was confirmed in the data from the interviews. Following are categories that were discovered and were deemed repetitive during this process. Similar words and phrases from Parents' 1-18 interviews included:

- “School practices” in parental involvement,
- School “encouraging and urging” parents through various communications,

- School “reaching out” to parents,
- School “making regular and consistent contact” with parents via:
 - emails,
 - phone,
 - letters,
 - school app and school messenger,
 - safe social media correspondence,
 - newsletters,
 - personal contacts,
- School proactively “involving parents in children’s education,” and
- Parents gaining “support” from the school and other parents as mentors.

The above categories repeated numerous times throughout the interviews from Parents 1 through 18 and helped form the basis of themes.

Parent 2’s perception of effective communication included “actively helping our children at home and school; being concerned about their education; going to the PTA meetings, parent-teacher conferences, field trips; and visiting the teachers when the time comes” demonstrates effective communication. Parent 9 stated, “Creating a two-way communication between us, as parents, and the school is important.” Parent 10 shared that, “Regular schedule of useful notes, phone calls, emails, and other communication makes a difference.”

Theme 3. Positive Perceptions of Teachers

Nine of the parents interviewed shared that they have experienced positive attitudes from most of their children’s teachers. Parents 1 through 9 had similar perceptions of the teachers.

Parent 1 commented:

The teachers have made me feel comfortable and at ease about the transition from elementary to middle school. It has been a positive experience for my child because she was very nervous to leave her elementary school and begin middle school with different teachers and switching classes.

Parent 2 stated:

The teachers have been great at mentoring my child at the school, although there are a few who seem less hands-on and not as caring. I think those are the teachers who need to retire because they have been at the school too long, and it shows in their attitudes toward my child and how they don't care one way or the other if we are involved as parents.

Parent 3 expressed similar sentiments:

Thus far, it has been a pretty decent experience. My husband and I really don't have any complaints as far as how the teachers are. They have been nice, helpful, and positive, and I can appreciate that. When we visit the school for a parent-teacher conference, the teachers have been nice and eager to help with any problems our child may be having via in-person, conferences, emails, school-approved social media platforms, school apps and messenger, or by phone.

Parent 4 shared:

Whenever I come to the school for something, such as checking my daughter out for an orthodontist appointment or if we are here for a fundraiser, the teachers will speak, and some stop for a moment to talk briefly and even ask how I am doing. That makes me feel that they care.

Parent 5 concluded:

There is a positive teacher-student rapport, as well, and I like the fact that the teachers interact and seem genuinely concerned about the children not just from their schoolwork or academic stuff but also their overall lives. They really strive to get to know our children—and that is a good feeling—and the teachers are open to us getting to know them. I also like the way the teachers communicate and keep us in the know by putting things on the school newsletter.

Parents 6 through 9 had similar perceptions about the working relationships of teachers and how well they seemingly relate to one another. Parent 6 said:

The teachers at the school seem to have a really beautiful rapport and work well together. That makes a difference, too, especially when the children are watching them interact with one another. At this age, these children are watching and observing everything. It's a good thing to see how the teachers respect one another. Because our children change classes, it's nice to know the teachers have a good work relationship and those teachers can work together to help the students and piggy-back off one another to learn more about their students. So, I believe they practice good teamwork as teachers and learn what's going on with my child to better determine how they can help together, as a team.

Theme 4. Positive Perceptions of Administrators

Fifteen of the 18 parents shared that there is a very proactive perception from administrators toward collaborating to enhance parental involvement and promote academic success among students.

Parent 6 stated:

So far, so good with the principal and assistant principal. They are both very friendly, approachable, and are proactive with focusing on our kids' achievements and doing well

in their subjects and making sure the family is participating in our students home-school lives, showing up for school (attendance), and well-prepared for the school day—even the guidance counselor and the Dean of Students. We’ve really gotten to know the dean and the assistant principal, since they have been visible in their offices, at times, during some of the school visits. They make things at the school welcoming and inviting when we are there.

Parent 9 expressed:

Student focused events and even the behavior of the students—well, I’ve noticed that the principal, assistant principal, and dean of students work nicely together. They communicate and involve us, as parents, and I like the fact that our kids are well-monitored nowadays—before the bell rings, during school, between classes on the halls, in the classrooms to check on teachers and students, and after school time. The majority of the parents voiced very similar perceptions about school administration, as they stated that the assistant principal and guidance counselor were very interactive, warm-spirited, and also very visible when children are being dropped off to school or picked up from school, and at school extracurricular events such as soccer, cheer, basketball, and football. These parents viewed school administration and staff as being involved and wanting to work and build relationships with parents collaboratively and effectively to ensure the students’ academic persistence and success from home to school.

Theme 5. Perception of School Communication From Parents

The majority of parents mentioned that the school’s faculty, staff, and administration are effective at communicating. Seventeen of the eighteen parents spoke favorably about the diversity of student enrollment and school personnel and the positive role that diversity plays in

relation to the school, working toward being effective at cultural sensitivity and representation of all races. In summation from the interviews, 16 out of the 18 parents stated that the most appealing aspect of the school was that most teachers, beginning in the sixth-grade classes, definitely reach out and communicate often and that it is up to the parents to readily and willingly respond to the teachers. All 18 parents initiated a response about really liking how their child's school wins awards on an annual basis for academic excellence. One parent indicated that it is a "good, effective school because of its high, competitive marks in all the counties in the area."

Parents felt that involvement at their child's school meant to "participate in activities; be in the know, in terms of what is going on with your middle-schooler; and be and remain proactive in various events and programs at the school whether your adolescent wants you around or not." Eighteen of the 18 parents expressed similar perspectives as to the importance of involvement as to ensure that the teacher knows the parent and knows that the parent is actively participating in their child's life in relation to school matters such as homework, tests, projects, and programs.

During the parent interviews, all 18 parent respondents indicated that parental involvement for them means to be made aware of what is going on not only by their children but by the teachers. Parent 16 stated:

All I ever want is for these teachers to communicate things to me so that my husband and I will know what is happening around the school because, at times, it gets hard to get my preteen to even fill us in on what programs or activities might be taking place. Although we have access to all of the electronic resources from the school, I still like to hear things from a live person such as my child's teacher, if possible. So, I don't mind setting up an

appointment to find out what's going on with my child and going by the school and talking. I also believe parental involvement takes place first with the school making the effort, first, then parents will follow and do what we need to do to help out.

Theme 6. Parental Involvement Opportunities

All 18 parents remarked that numerous parental involvement opportunities are available when the school hosts activities, such as: awards programs, sports-related events, book fairs, field trips, Fall Festival, pumpkin patch and hayride, Halloween class parties, school carnival, parent-teacher events and conferences, and PTA. Automated-generated text alerts and reminders that are sent out help them to further plan to attend school events. Parents made similar comments about how they do their best to make sure they can attend, chaperone, or volunteer for school opportunities when their schedule allows.

Parent 10's comments were almost synonymous to the other parents:

I do my best to try and visit the school as often as I can, even if my child thinks she is too old to have me or her dad involved just because she is in middle school and is a preteen now. That doesn't matter because we still want to know what's going on and how we can help out and make sure our daughter does well in her classes and at this school. During those scheduled days on the school calendar when parents are encouraged to come in, such as for parent-teacher conferences, I feel good about being there, and if I don't come in, then my husband will. We feel good and welcomed about the school opportunities being available and we only have ourselves to blame if we don't attend.

Parent 18 offered a brief comment about parental involvement:

Communicating with my children's teachers for all classes, emailing them back and forth helps me to have a handle on things. It's a great thing to have that communication and feedback going with them, especially when there is a problem.

Parent 14 is a big proponent of ensuring that she knows what is going on with the curricula in each class:

I really enjoy knowing what my son is studying and what topics are being discussed in his different classes. This helps me be more engaged and when he brings homework back home or when I check his material and grades, I always like to talk with him about the different lessons and topics learned in those classes, and he likes that.

Theme 7. Expectations of Parental Involvement

All teachers and administrators interviewed shared their perceptions pertaining to parental involvement. Teacher 1 discussed the importance of parents being involved in various aspects of their children's school life:

I would like to see my parents support my students, involve themselves in prioritizing their children, especially during such a critical time as I view middle school because my students are at an impressionable age now. It would be ideal to see my parents be supportive by reinforcing what is being taught here because that level of parental involvement sets my students up for academic success. This is important!

Teacher 2 also shared the critical nature of parental involvement:

I set necessary expectations from the parents to be involved, and I expect them to deliver. Prioritize their children's education. So far, so good. My parents have been doing quite well in checking in, attending a variety of school programs, and as we begin our

preliminary planning for our end-of-year programs for the month of May, quite a number of parents have already inquired and that makes me feel good about my moms and dads.

Teacher 3 commented:

Parental involvement is pretty good here and this is my 16th year here. We make it a point to stress the importance of parental involvement. I don't accept excuses from parents about them telling me how badly their child wants his or her independence now that they are no longer in elementary school. I let my parents know how deeply important it is to remain involved in their children's lives, especially by showing interest and being consistent with their involvement. I always have said that if a parent can take time out to attend their son's football game or their daughter's cheer competition, then parents should also be just as interested and involved in their children's education and successful academic outcomes.

Within the focus group of administrators who were interviewed, Administrator 1 voiced:

Of course, our students come first but equally important is the role the parents play in our students lives. That home-school connection is super important. First and foremost, is support on both ends—we support our children and parents here and desire the same for our school system and our school community and culture. That's inclusive of everyone and every aspect of learning and having a successful middle school here. The first expectation of our parents is to have our students here so that we can have successful students with successful outcomes. Getting and remaining involved consists of a myriad of choices we have here, at our school. We are about inclusivity and wanting and needing the parents to know how important their children are to us and how we must function as a

team to get the job done, and our students can continue to grow, evolve, learn, and succeed.

Administrator 2 shared with the focus group discussion, factors that she feels influence parental involvement outcomes:

In my professional opinion, one of the most vital elements to students succeeding academically is parental involvement. Our parents must do their job with being consistently involved from the very beginning. The parents' behaviors, interest, involvement, and consistency in their children's school life plays an integral part in student performance. Some of my parents are on board and some are not, and it makes all the difference- one way or the other. I interface with a number of positive parents and some disgruntled ones, quite often; however, some of our parents must realize that it is a collaborative effort, and they are their child's first point of contact when it comes to education and the value instilled in them. More importantly, it is the parent's responsibility to find ways to be involved, and we are always here to help and assist with favorable outcomes. Our school would never want a parent to feel as if they must attend all school events. However, our aim is to continue welcoming our parents in, while the parents find meaningful, engaging, proactive ways to be involved—even if it is just a temp check with their child's teacher(s). One email or nudge can speak volumes and open doors to wonderful parent-teacher-school relationships that go a long way.

Theme 8. Positive School Environment

All teachers and administrators conveyed promoting and fostering a positive school environment, especially in the classrooms where the learning takes place.

Teacher 1 stated:

Encounters and experiences within our school should be filled with as much effective communication and positivity as possible. I have been teaching middle school Math and Science for 22 years and even I sometimes have to remind myself the importance of remaining positive and how this big middle school can be quite intimidating for the parents and students, especially when transitioning from elementary to middle school.

Middle school is a wonderful, new world for them; but we must be mindful and aware about the importance of being supportive, communicative, and approachable for our parents so that their minds can be at ease. Being interactive and helpful creates a gateway for parents wanting and desiring to be involved. Middle school is a new experience for some of our families, and we want it to be a positive experience here and want our families to know that we genuinely pride ourselves on being a school family.

All administrators in the focus group agreed that principal relationships impact school climate, and the importance of rallying around the teachers and staff to ensure good rapports are important.

Administrator 3 stated:

Teachers are hardly seen in the hall because they are busy teaching in their classrooms, but the relationship with our principal and other admin has been pretty good, and parents see this and feel good about the respectful, team-oriented interactions that can be seen. I can say very confidently that our admin team and faculty members are solution-based and driven to be genuinely supportive and help out in any way.

Administrator 2 offered an explanation about the critical nature of having the gym assembly and meeting/get acquainted timeline with parents:

Having our families come to our school during these events serves as a great tool to begin developing relationships with them at the very beginning of the school year. We do our very best to get the word out and communicate the information so that we can have a successful turnout from families.

Administrator 3 viewed parental involvement at school by commenting:

I feel parent involvement here is good but would like to find more effective ways and resources to get those parents we hardly ever see- in and involved.

Theme 9. Supportive Networking and Open, Collaborative Efforts Among School Community

Teachers and the school administrators focus group concluded that family (parental) involvement should be an ongoing process and open, collaborative community efforts that adapt to the needs and strengths of the families within the school's network are critical.

Teacher 3 suggested:

Providing parental support and encouragement is always a good start when factoring in networking with our parents. Our pre-teens and teens here are our future, and we have to practice and promote the importance of these children's development and working together to ensure success in them. It will always take a village or group effort to have a strong school community.

Administrator 2 provided similar feedback:

When our kids here see everyone in their lives working together and giving the kind of support needed to help one another, that shows a strong school community. Our home and school interconnections and networking keep our school strong, and the trust, support, and collaborative communication between our parents and teachers are important for learning, development, and the evolution of a strong, sustainable

community. From attending open house, family night, to attending a parent-teacher conference or a sporting event here, parents have to collaborate with us and vice-versa to make it all work as seamlessly as possible.

Administrator 3 emulated similar statements about a student-centered and family-supporting collaborative approach:

Yes. Reaching our parents through a network they feel is trustworthy and supportive is important. We do not want to concentrate or focus on just one setting separately because the home-school connection is just that—a connection and a link. Working collaboratively is contingent on the level of connection and coordination of our networking efforts across both settings and is key for our children here to see us working together as a community. When we have those good relationships among parents, faculty, admin, staff, our middle-schoolers witness that sense of community among us. This creates so much potential in our students to do well and our community, as a whole, because it captures the importance and success of meaningful relationships.

Theme 10. Promoting and Enhancing Communication and Parental Involvement Efforts Between Parents and School

All teachers and administrators interviewed encouraged effective, open lines of communication between the home and school community. Teacher 1 discussed the importance of consistent (and persistent) communication efforts with parents, especially those parents who are not as vocal, visible, and involved:

I mostly utilize our school app to communicate with parents. I really enjoy using it and have had a 95% parent success rate this year. The app is user friendly, and parents can contact me so quickly. I easily and seamlessly send messages to the entire group of

parents and send individual messages, if and when necessary. It's worked out—been great. I've had parents tell me that it helps so much. Parents like the feature on the app where they can ask questions and we can respond to the parents or give them a call if they wish. Being a parent, I know firsthand the value of being able to know what's going on with one's child at school and the teacher making that specific info so readily available. It's also a great way to learn more about home conditions and family life that support my students and to better understand those family dynamics, learning at home, decision-making, and other activities at home that impact the child.

All teachers and administrators commented that supportive, open, and collaborative efforts have also been favorable with the school's monthly newsletters and calendars. Teacher 2 explained:

Just about any and everything that's going on in the school community is listed on the school calendar for the upcoming month and school newsletter that goes out electronically to all parents. This has worked very well, and parents have stated that they like to have such pertinent information at their fingertips to keep abreast of dates and special school activities. That way they can plan ahead to volunteer and support our students and school programs when it comes to special events such as field trips, our literacy extravaganza, PTA meetings, Science Fairs, our Annual Cultural Arts exhibit, Cinco De Mayo, People of Asia, book fairs, and other vital components of the school community such as advocacy and decision-making. Our office also uses School Messenger which sends home important messages, as needed, to parents such as weather alerts, school closures, early dismissals, exam schedules, report cards, holiday reminders, parent-teacher conference dates and timelines, and special activities such as Dads & Donuts or Moms and Muffins. Parents feel connected when getting these alerts and

adjusting their work schedules to attend certain school activities. Then, they get to see us at all of the school functions. This becomes a positive way to network and get better acquainted with one another.

Within the administrators' focus group, they resoundingly agreed on how they have collaborative efforts with community stakeholders and how well the school has done by participating as community helpers with the local fire department; nearby police precinct; community health, fitness, and yoga; and providing a holiday concert at the nearby assisted living facility.

Administrator 1 shared that:

Parents are invited as chaperones, and it has worked out very well. We always want a 100% participation rate from parents; and parents should feel as empowered, valued partners in the overall education of their children.

Teachers and administrators interviewed also voiced similar sentiments about establishing trust and respect from parents so that they have the desire to be involved especially when parents feel that teachers and principals are approachable and relatable.

Teacher 1 stated that:

Fostering parent-teacher relationships that's built on trust is key. When parents have concerns and feel comfortable asking questions or contacting me, they know the open-door policy is of utmost importance and I make time to see them.

All teachers and administrators commented that there are some factors that have negatively impacted home/parent-school relationships such as socioeconomic and cultural or language barriers status. The administrator focus group stated that the school is working toward developing more effective initiatives to foster relationships with parents with language barriers.

Teacher 2 stated:

I honestly believe that some of our parents here have social or financial scenarios and situations that are beyond their control and such things get in the way of being involved, and it's tough for them to ask for help or inform us here, at the school about their hardships. We actually have a phenomenal guidance counselor who is extremely resourceful and can help parents in these difficult situations that impede the establishment of school rapport or relationships.

Also, we have a mentoring program where parents help other parents. We are going to also begin offering life skills classes and training for our parents on Saturday mornings and this can very well help them improve and increase their ability to be more effective, involved parents and encourage more family engagement at home and school. All they have to do is just reach out for the help. Our goal is to provide opportunities for all parents to work and learn together from one another, network, empower themselves, and build value so that our school community can develop capacity for families which can in turn really improve our school and our students' academic outcomes.

As administration and faculty, it is our duty to make our parents feel welcome and to be open, offer a listening ear and share with them the excitement that we feel to have their child here, at this school, and how delighted we are to forge positive relationships with them and the expectations that go along with that.

The administrator's focus group and all teachers agreed that fear is one of the most monumental barriers that parents face. Administrators and teachers interviewed stated that despite parents being told and reminded by the school about the support available and the excitement of forging positive relationships between parents and the school, fear of the unknown and being apprehensive about the school due to their own past personal experiences serve as

impediments to communication and parental involvement. All administrators voiced this as a concern and how they have continued to work tirelessly in ensuring a school climate of parental inclusivity without fear.

Other parent-centered barriers that teachers and administrators found to be challenging within the school were: parents lacking time, due to their work schedules and other competing commitments and family life dynamics; parents being unable to access transportation for some to commute to and from the school for activities, programs, and school-related events or have sitters or other family members to care for other children in the home while parents attend school functions; parents lacking formal education, particularly to enable themselves to help their children with homework and projects; cultural and socioeconomic differences between parents and school stakeholders; and language impediments between parents and the school community.

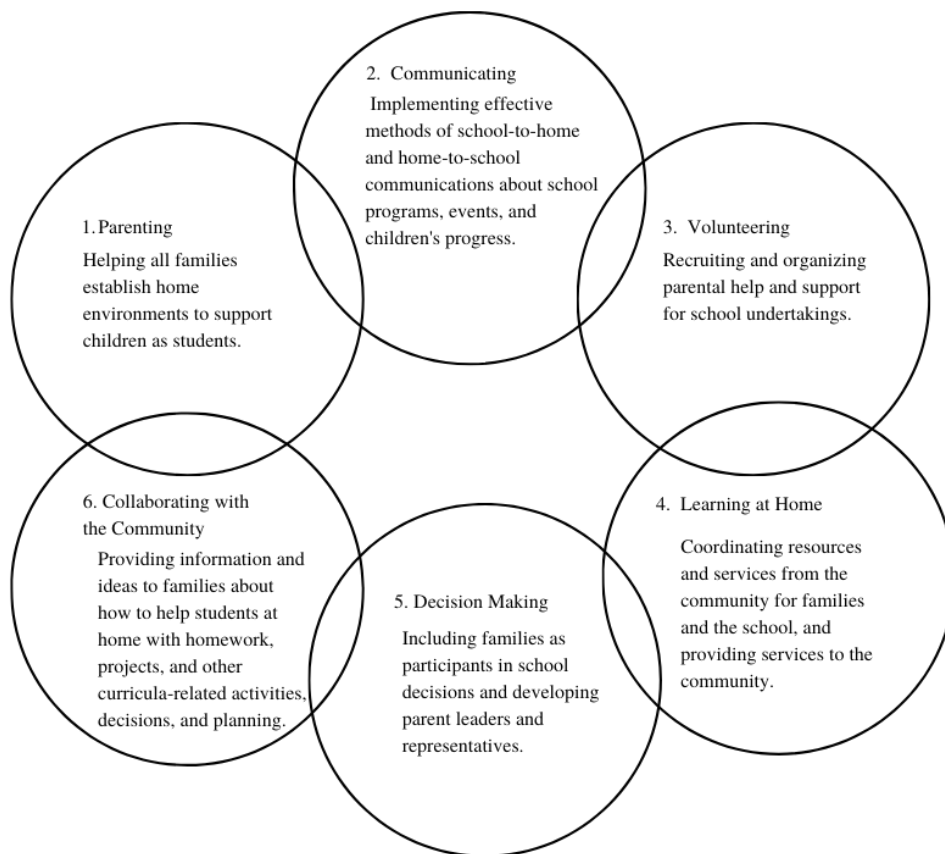
All teachers and administrator focus groups noticed a common and recurring theme for school-centered barriers, as well. Barriers included: school stakeholders lacking time; faculty, staff, and administrators lacking effective and ongoing training and professional development in working with parents; and preconceived ideas and attitudes about parents.

Summary of Qualitative Findings

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine parent-school partnership strategies from the viewpoint of parents, teachers, and administrators. The results in Chapter 4 represent the comments provided by 24 participants during scheduled interviews. Coding and transcribing of data from the participants' interviews brought about the following themes: the family and parenting dynamics at school; effective open lines of communication between home, parents, and school; positive perceptions of teachers; positive perceptions of administrators, perceptions of school communication from parents; parental involvement opportunities; expectations of

parental involvement; positive school environment; supportive networking and open, collaborative efforts among school community; and promoting and enhancing communication and parental involvement efforts between parents, from home to school. Perceptions of relationships revealed effective communication and support; heightened awareness for involvement opportunities and development; importance of school meetings; and ensuring openness between parents, faculty, staff, and administration. Impediments revealed communication, parent and family factors, lack of time, agendas, work schedules, cultural issues, educational and language barriers, socioeconomic challenges, and school-centered inhibitions.

The study had similar findings to those of Epstein's Six Overlapping Spheres of Influence of Parent, School, and Community Involvement (Figure 2). The study revealed how Epstein identified parental involvement which included: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating in the community. Epstein's parental involvement (Epstein, 2018) groundwork helped frame both the research questions and analysis within the study. Chapter 5 provides a discussion, conclusion, and recommendations for this study.

Figure 2*Epstein's Six Overlapping Spheres of Parental Involvement*

Note. This model shows associations between Epstein's theoretical framework and the study's findings in relation to parental involvement. The structure is supported with an explanation for each type of parental involvement and similar examples found in the study to further illustrate the correlation. Adapted from *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action* (p. 81), by J. L. Epstein et al., 2009, Corwin Press.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to examine the perceptions of middle school parents, middle school teachers, and middle school administrators in relation to school partnerships and collaborative efforts within a Georgia school. Participants consisted of 18 parents of children who are currently enrolled in middle school, three middle school teachers, and three middle school administrators. This qualitative study consisted of five chapters. Chapter 1 presented the introduction, background of the study, statement of the problem, conceptual basis of the study, purpose of the study, research questions, definition of key terms, and summary and organization of the study.

Chapter 2 provided a review of literature and research related to the research questions being investigated. Chapter 3 presented the research method and design, the data collection procedure, the rationale for using this design, the researcher's role, ethical considerations, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. A detailed description of the results, analyses, and findings that emerged from the study are disseminated in Chapter 4. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes with a summary and discussion of the study, conclusion, and recommendations for further research. Data collected from parents, teachers, and administrators enabled an inclusive look at the perceptions of parent-school partnership strategies and the impact of these relationships on parental involvement. Parents, teachers, and administrators provided their viewpoints on stakeholder perceptions of parental involvement.

This study was guided by four research questions. The data from interviews were coded, transcribed, and examined to determine emerging themes. Field notes were taken throughout the process of data collection and analysis. Information presented from this study may convey to educators, faculty, staff, and administrators the critical nature of school-community partnerships

and the implications of such relationships, particularly during the child's middle school years. Considerations from this research could help ensure there are open lines of communication with stakeholders as well as provide numerous opportunities to support parental involvement. Four research questions guided the process throughout this qualitative study. These questions investigated the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators in a middle school setting.

Discussion

Research Question 1

How do parents and schools define parental involvement? A total of 18 parents were interviewed in this study. The parents' experiences were positive, stating how they liked the manner that teachers consistently communicate and focus on the importance of parental involvement and support. Parental interactions within the school are what parents viewed as parental involvement and such an interactive approach among parents is likely to yield more trust due to the level of activities that the parent undertakes (Epstein, 2018). Epstein found that parental involvement during the middle school years is critical to success when analyzing levels of parental involvement in middle school education. Epstein encouraged parents to engage themselves in their children's school programs and activities as well as their educational processes in order to increase academic success among students.

Parents viewed parental involvement as being a more direct engagement in their children's education while feeling wanted and needed. In a like manner, parental involvement was also termed as having a positive home environment to support their children with scheduling useful school notes, phone calls, emails, and other communication as a parent. Throughout the interviews with parents, the family aspect at school was a recurring theme when parents spoke of parental involvement. Parents felt that community involvement goes hand-in-hand with parental

involvement, as both increase social capital such as accessible persons who have the capability to further success such as friends, peers, and social contacts (Erdener & Knoepfel, 2020). Parents also felt that with both parents and teachers working together, listening to each other, gathering information to benefit the students, and working together creates a mutually beneficial association.

Teachers and administrators shared that parental involvement is when their families at the school show and take interest and feel more motivated to engage in school resources and other varying services to help empower them, as parents.

Research Question 2

In what ways do parents, teachers, and administrators collectively collaborate to promote parental involvement and foster academic success among students? Three school administrators were interviewed in this study. Administrative participants were asked about their expectations among parents and teachers, in relation to participation as a stakeholder within the middle school setting. Administrator 1 revealed that she sets realistic expectations of both faculty and parents, as everyone should work diligently to do their best to contribute to the enhancement of the school community; and of utmost importance, is the parent's role in being involved. Hausman and Goldring (2020) concluded that parental involvement in the school promotes student success. Administrator 1 expressed her expectations as being vital so that teachers can know to serve as partners to parents and assist those parents in keeping their children at school while supporting the school. Both teacher and administrators believe that supporting families with empathy and encouraging them to get involved in their children's academic undertakings demonstrates effective collaboration and builds connections and partnerships.

Yulianti et al., (2020) postulated the importance of parental involvement, as it helps forge positive school relationships that ultimately improve the school's entire community. For Administrator 1, a viable relationship between the parents and the school system is paramount, as it is difficult to function without the support of parents. According to administrators and teachers—encouraging volunteerism, decision-making among parents through the PTA, school committees, and school action teams (with consistent participation among parents) are effective tools to keep all stakeholders engaged. To maximize school and community relationships, school programs, events, and activities should involve the parents, teachers, and students. It is also critical for the school to engage with parents using nonacademic and informal communicative entities such as holiday and cultural celebrations, sporting events, and other extracurricular activities.

Research Question 3

What are the barriers that impede parental involvement in the student's school life? The teachers and administrators both agreed that socioeconomic status has been an impediment to school community collaborative efforts among parents. Community involvement in schools is paramount to the success of students, especially in low socioeconomic areas (Hausman & Goldring, 2020). Parents have time constraints due to their work schedules and other time conflicts that prevent them from being involved in school activities. In addition, parents are sometimes fearful and apprehensive to communicate with the school, as they do not want to ever appear negligent with their children's home and school life. One of the teachers interviewed shared that most parents' past negative experiences with schooling are their rationale for lacking parental involvement. Parents have been more inclined to view their negative past experiences with their current school relationship and avoid much, if any, parental involvement within the

school community. Uncertainties and resistance from the child who is reluctant about his or her parents' involvement, as some middle school children would rather have more autonomy at school than have their parents involved.

All teachers stated that although the majority of parents welcome consistent communication, numerous parents avoid making contact with the school. If parents believe that communication is a barrier to their involvement in their children's school, they may be less willing to engage in their child's education (Epstein, 2018). According to one teacher, parents who make the decision not to communicate with the school may do so because of socioeconomic status challenges and diverse, cultural or language barriers. In such cases, it is important that the school provides the level of support needed to prevent those parents from enduring negative experiences under their children's current school. From the parent's perspective, the most significant barrier to parental involvement can be the anxiety associated with their child attending middle school for the first time or a new school altogether.

When parents feel comfortable and trust the school, its teachers, and administration- then that usually is the gateway in developing trust. Trust plays an important part in building collaborative partnerships and parental involvement. In turn, parental engagement develops more trust as a result of varying activities in which a parent is involved (Prakhov & Sazhina, 2020). This provides a welcoming environment for parents whereby the school shows interest and support of their students.

Research Question 4

Which best practices contribute to higher levels of parental involvement among parents and schools? Parents, teachers, and administrators believe that communication is key. Consistent, effective parent-teacher communication improves and simplifies the entire home-school process

for all stakeholders involved, stated all interviewees. Such communication assists teachers in fostering a viable parental engagement plan and helps the children get the support they need and deserve from their families. Digital tools such as the school app, messenger, and electronic emails, and text alerts have been advantageous at the middle school. Parents have commented positively about the level of ease and comfort such resources provide in learning more about what is going on at the school and with their children. Some parents feel overwhelmed and uncertain about the information they receive electronically. Such parents need more professional development and mentoring as it relates to support networks at the school (Epstein, 2018).

Teachers are aware of the importance of focusing on building relationships with parents to establish a rapport and foster those relationships throughout the year by making sure parents have the necessary tools and opportunities. School administrators shared that it is vital that their school ensure that parents have opportunities to build rapport with their children's school community which should encompass a team of stakeholders to assist parents in becoming and remaining involved in their child's academic life, including learning specialists to assist the parents; and providing training, resources, and support to encourage family and parental involvement at home and school. Through this understanding, administrators also stressed in-service training for their teachers and professional development programs in parental involvement and cultural sensitivity.

Both teachers and administrators stated the importance of providing specific outreach to parents, particularly with the utilization of technology to assist in better communication, especially with diverse groups with language, cultural, and socioeconomic barriers- and differences. Programs are needed that focus on courses for parents and families that will improve parenting and life skills by increasing their know-how to support their children's education that

leads to successful academic outcomes and by getting them involved in community building and advocacy and purposeful collaborative efforts and partnerships within the community to further access parental resources and services (Biag & Castrechini, 2016).

Teachers stated that it is their goal to empower parents so that the children can be empowered and motivated to learn and reach academic success, build parent leadership, and develop capacity for families. All administrators agreed that they are in the business, as frontline stakeholders, to create effective strategies, support, and advocacy with a positive school culture, focusing on initiatives that increase parental involvement and improve student achievement.

The 18 parent participants in this study were involved to some degree in school community activities at their child's school. Even though some parents were more involved than others, all participants made an effort to attend school community activities throughout the school year. Furthermore, providing a variety of opportunities for parent involvement can help facilitate school community relationships. Both teachers and administrators agreed that their schools provide many different activities to involve parents.

This study consisted of a heterogeneous sample of participants, which was composed of African parents, Black parents, Caucasian parents, Latino parents, and one Asian parent. Research has revealed that White, middle-class parents are more disproportionately involved in the education of their children in comparison to parents from other socioeconomic and cultural groups (Hughes et al., 2017). Twenty-four participant responses from parents, teachers, and administrators were consistent in relation to their perceptions about working cohesively in a school community. All teachers and administrators indicated that each had a positive outlook on developing a school and classroom culture that is conducive to forging strong bonds and relationships between varying stakeholders affiliated with the school. Parents shared how they

are grateful for the family-oriented atmosphere in their children's classrooms. Participants also stated that the family environment at school further supported their personal ties to home and family values. Findings also showed that parental involvement plays a role in the academic outcomes of middle school students. When parents are actively engaged and consistent in their children's education, student success will follow (Epstein, 2018).

Each theme presented shared remarkable semblances to that of Epstein's six overlapping spheres of influence that work toward effective parental involvement (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with the community), denoting "communicating" as being the most critical in strengthening parental involvement within the school community.

Implications for Practice

Data gathered from the review of literature, interviews, and field notes show that school community collaborative partnerships play an integral part in the middle school setting and have the potential to improve relationships between all stakeholders (Epstein, 2018). The following are recommendations for all stakeholders involved.

- Communication is an essential part of school community relationships (Jeynes, 2018). Administrators and teachers should continue using effective methods of communication such as school app, school messenger, text alerts, and electronic communication. Teachers should also provide daily, weekly, and monthly updates of school activities to encourage more parent involvement.

- A positive school climate is very welcoming to parents (Keane, 2016; Kim & Bryan, 2017). It is important for faculty, staff, and administration to provide a positive school atmosphere and involvement opportunities for stakeholders. The school community is

encouraged to continue welcoming and inviting parents into school as well as providing a myriad of opportunities for parents to build more effective school community relationships. Central office leadership staff within the school's district should provide professional development opportunities to further develop and forge positive relationships with community stakeholders (Alexander et al., 2017; Epstein, 2018; Hausman & Goldring, 2020; Jeynes, 2018; Keane, 2016; Kim & Bryan, 2017; Park & Holloway, 2018).

Recommendations for Future Research

A positive relationship between school and collaborative partnerships is a necessity for academic success. After collecting and analyzing the data, additional recommendations can also be explored. Recommendations for future researchers who would like to implement a study with a similar topic include the following.

- Expand the study to include a diverse socioeconomic status. This study was limited to participants in the Atlanta, Georgia area. Data may not represent the perceptions of all teachers, parents, and administrators. In addition, the results may not be generalized to other middle school classrooms.
- Select a questionnaire that yields numerical data and analysis of academic success.
- Consider focusing on a narrower set of themes and concepts. It will be easier to identify and describe relationships between such variables, if any.
- Choose the quantitative research approach for future research to have more scientific findings, thus allowing larger amounts of data to be gathered and analyzed (Creswell, 2017). This approach would eradicate any biases. In addition, a quantitative research approach to this study would also give the researcher the opportunity to have more control over how the data is gathered with an objective perspective and clearly defined research questions to present. Also, a

quantitative approach to this study would allow a larger sample size, which in turn, helps the researcher can gain statistically valid results (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

- Conduct the same study; however, recruit different participants from a different school, in an effort to yield different results.
- Expand the research in the area of perceptions between students and parents, A research expansion will provide outcomes and help add to the conversation about home-school parental involvement and partnerships among stakeholders.

Conclusion

This case study was conducted to explore how middle school parents', teachers', and administrators' experiences and perceptions concerning parental involvement inform their facilitation of engagement and partnerships in education. The goal of this study was to explore and describe the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators regarding parental involvement in education and to ascertain their perceptions of the connection between parental involvement and academic success.

Valuable insights emerged during this study and included: teachers and administrators in the study contending that parental support is important in navigating a child's education; teachers working diligently to develop positive, open, consistent, and persistent communication with their students' parents and to implement school-based programs and activities to motivate parents in becoming more engaged in the school; parents placing value in teacher and administrative support in parental involvement fears and feats; and how teachers assert that parental involvement is positively linked to academic success. The most critical area of concern for teachers was communication with parents.

Several teachers maintained that persistent communication barriers have impeded their efforts with gaining effective parental involvement. Such an area of concern indicates the need for teachers to have additional support via professional development, in-service, and other teacher preparation programs, as well as support from their school administrators. The increased knowledge from this study will help both teachers and administrators in middle schools reach their potential as guiding, viable resources when advocating for parental involvement and academic success.

Middle schools have the capacity to use their influence to bring about positive change among parents and families whom they lead and serve. Schools cannot do it all. Parents cannot do it all. However, when both parents and schools work together, great things happen. It is my hope that this study serves as a resource for school leadership and other stakeholders to utilize so that they may gain more insightful knowledge to make great things happen that will ultimately change the trajectory of parent-school partnerships for generations to come.

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Appendix A: Parent Interview Questions

1. What does parental involvement mean to you?
2. What does it mean to be or feel involved at your child's school?
3. What do you like about your child's school?
4. Do you feel welcome at your child's school? If so, explain the ways that school personnel demonstrate welcoming you there. If not, tell me some ways that school personnel could utilize to make you feel welcome? Do you feel unwelcomed or uninvited at your child's school? If so, explain how?
5. How does the school ask you to be involved? How does this work for you? Tell me about how you are involved at the school and with your child's teacher. What would you like to see take place from the school to help you get more involved? Over time, how has your involvement changed/not changed?
6. In what ways do you prepare your child to be successful in school? How has the school assisted you in helping your child more at home (i.e., self-efficacy, motivation, awareness, approaches)?
7. What are the ways that the school communicates with you about your child? Explain if these ways are frequent and favorable.
8. What challenges can you express that must be solved to implement involvement such as promoting parental support, facilitating communication, encouraging volunteerism, fostering home learning, involving parents in decisions, and providing community activities?

9. Describe opportunities you may have to express your concerns or opinions about your child's school. Do you serve on any school committees, parental advisory boards, or PTA? Why? Why not?
10. What is your engagement with other parents? Have you observed parents supporting and encouraging one another? Have you received any moral support and encouragement to get involved from your child's teacher, leaders such as the principal, assistant principal, dean of students, guidance counselor? Please provide a description of any motivational nudging to get involved, supportive partnering from other parents, teachers, or school administrators.
11. Describe the types of school activities that you prefer to attend. What benefits do you receive serving in a school role (i.e., parent volunteer, room mom, chaperone)?
12. Describe any learning opportunities, support services, useful material, and resources that are currently in place or could be offered by the school (i.e., professional development for parents, workshops, seminars, training) to better prepare you as a parent to work with your child.
13. What ways do you see, as a parent, whereby parents, teachers, and administrators collaborate to further enhance involvement and foster academic success with your child?
14. Who has helped you develop expectations for involvement in your child's school?
What or who has helped you develop values or practices related to involvement?
15. What role or past influences during your childhood/adolescence did your parents have that has impacted your involvement as a parent today?

Appendix B: Teacher Interview Questions

1. As an educator, what have you observed that parents are doing to demonstrate they are involved in their child's education and academic success?
2. What do you do as a teacher to promote high levels of parental involvement, collaboration, and motivation among your students' parents at the school?
3. What are your methods of communication, collaboration, and partnering with parents? Why have you chosen such methods, and which methods prove to be more effective at reaching parents?
4. What are the most enjoyable aspects of working with parents at your school?
5. What impediments, challenges, or barriers do you encounter as a teacher in attempting to increase parental involvement among the parents?
6. What challenges can you express that must be solved to implement involvement such as promoting parental support, facilitating communication, encouraging volunteerism, fostering home learning, involving parents in decisions, and providing community activities?
7. What resources, factors, support activities, services, or collaborative efforts do you deem as critically necessary to enhance parental involvement at your school?
8. Describe ways you make your classroom environment an inviting, welcoming, comfortable place for not only the child but for the parent?
9. Describe ways that you reach out to parents to speak about involvement and its frequency? How well does that work? In what ways, as a teacher, does your school address cultural sensitivity and other demographical aspects (such as socioeconomic

class) that could help foster, promote, and sustain parental involvement among parents?

10. How often do you provide effective communication to the parent about their child's academic status in the classroom, behavior, subject areas, and overall educational achievement in school?

Appendix C: Administrator Focus Group Questions

1. What do you think is the importance of parental involvement at your school?
2. Describe connections you see between parental involvement and academic success.
3. Describe any scenarios or stories where involving disadvantaged parents may have impacted their child's learning and academic success?
4. Describe some of the ways that you and your teaching staff involve parents at your school and in your child's education
5. What specific and consistent measures are taken to reach out to those parents who are not involved?
6. What strategies and resources are in place at your school that can address parents and children from marginalized homes (i.e., single-parent homes, minority families, cultural/language barriers, low-income, literacy challenges)?
7. What challenges can you express that must be solved to implement involvement such as promoting parental support, facilitating communication, encouraging volunteerism, fostering home learning, involving parents in decisions, and providing community activities?
8. What are educators, administration, parents, and community partners doing (or currently have in place with your school) to bring contexts together? What barriers must be resolved to successfully implement effective parental involvement practices? What collaborative efforts among parents, teachers, and administrators, that you are aware of, can enhance parental involvement and foster academic success among students?

9. What access do your parents have to collaborative, supportive efforts, and resources to empower them and further promote, nudge, and enhance parental involvement?
10. What role does your leadership team play in getting parents involved in the PTA or school advisory board, etc.? In what ways as a teacher does your school address cultural sensitivity and other demographical aspects such as socioeconomic class that could help foster, promote, and sustain parental involvement among parents?
11. What ways do you view as being effective to improve parent-home-school relationships and engagement?
12. In your leadership role, what strides have you taken to get parents involved that strengthens students' academic skills to achieve academic success?

Appendix D: IRB Approval Letter

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103
325-674-2885

January 28, 2020



Jil Mssucco
Department of Counseling
Abilene Christian University

Dear Jil,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled "A Case Study on the Efficacy of Parent-School Partnership Strategies Toward Academic Success: Perspectives of Parents, Teachers, and Administrators",

(IRB# 20-004)is exempt from review under Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects.

If at any time the details of this project change, please resubmit to the IRB so the committee can determine whether or not the exempt status is still applicable.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

Megan Roth

Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs

Appendix E: Recruitment Letter

Notification and Recruitment of Research Study

Hello Prospective Participant!

My name is Jil Massucco. I am a doctoral student at Abilene Christian University (ACU), and I am conducting a study within your school community. I am interested in speaking with you to gain insight, experiences, perspectives, and perceptions from parents, middle school teachers, and school administrators (Grades 6-8) about parental involvement and academic success. My research project is entitled: *A Qualitative Case Study Examining Parental Involvement and Parent-School Partnership Strategies in a Middle School: Perspectives of Parents, Teachers, and Administrators*.

This is important research, as parental involvement in relation to student academic success has emerged as a significant issue in education. Research maintains that active parental involvement is more pivotal to student achievement than any social factor. Parental involvement strategies must be re-evaluated in order to find new methods that will improve engagement and academic success, thereby narrowing the inconsistencies between socioeconomic classes.

Your participation in this research is voluntary and confidential. This research has the potential to benefit you directly, as it may change and enhance your future educational practices, interactions, and involvement, the school community, and the school district, overall. Your participation can give way to benefits and successful outcomes such as developing collaborative parent-school partnerships and ultimately promote academic excellence in the classroom and overall sustainability within the school community.

Should you decide to participate in this study, I look forward to conducting an interview with you. Should you have any questions that the school has directed for me to answer, please notify me via email, phone, or text: xxx-xxx-xxx, xxx@acu.edu.

Thank you,
Jil Massucco
Doctoral Candidate, ACU