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Teachers' Perceptions of the Role of Teacher-Parent Partnerships That Best Benefit Students in a Parochial College Preparatory High School

Sarah H. Gates
smg17b@acu.edu

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Joey L. Cope

Dr. Joey Cope, Dean of the
College of Graduate and
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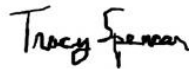
Dissertation Committee:

S Bailey

Dr. Scott Bailey, Chair

Bill Hunt

Dr. Bill Hunt

Tracy Spencer

Dr. Tracy Spencer

Abilene Christian University

School of Educational Leadership

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by

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Dedication

Some people come into our lives and leave footprints on our hearts and we are never ever the same.

—Flavia Weedn, *Flavia and the Dream Maker,* 1999

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Stefan. From the beginning of this journey to the end, you have supported me every step of the way as my cheerleader, confidant, my voice of reason, and meal cooker extraordinaire! Thank you. I love you, and you are my everything. I am beyond blessed for your unconditional love and support.

To my mom and dad, Andrew, Ben, Jaime, Jacob, Lily, Sam, Sandra, Doug, Cari and all of my family members, this work is also dedicated to you. You never stopped listening, always supported, continually encouraged, and motivated me to be the best and give the best version of myself in everything I do. I love all of you so much for always motivating me to go the extra mile. Thank you for sharing this adventure with me and making sure I took time to stop and enjoy the most important aspects of life, family.

To my Grandma and Grandpa Scott and Grandma and Grandpa Smith, and my brother Jacob, although you are no longer here, your presence remains. Jacob, just as you would say, "Every day is a good day." Each of you has instilled in me a lifelong love of learning and left an imprint on my heart forever. I am eternally grateful for the experiences and memories I hold in my heart. Know that I love you "all the bushels in the world!"

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It was through this dissertation process that I gained a deeper appreciation for the art of writing. I am truly grateful for the assistance of my editor, Sonia Castleberry, who taught me the details about APA style (6th and 7th edition!) and shared her knowledge about the importance of making the meaning of words come to life. From Chapter 1 to Chapter 5, I truly appreciated your effort and willingness to go above and beyond by providing me with additional resources, recommendations, and information to refine my writing. Thank you!

Abstract

Current research on teacher–parent partnerships has increasingly focused on early childhood education. This transcendental phenomenological study expanded and extended the understanding of effective teacher–parent partnerships in secondary education at a parochial college preparatory high school. According to Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory (BST), academic growth and development in late adolescents are impacted by the overlapping systems of influence: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify secondary educators' perceptions of teacher–parent partnerships that best benefit students. Faculty at a parochial college preparatory high school were asked about their perceptions of parental involvement in teacher–parent partnerships and the competencies or skills needed for effective teacher–parent partnerships. Differences between new and veteran teachers' perceptions of parental involvement in teacher–parent partnerships were examined. Study findings indicated that teachers perceive teacher–parent partnerships as an essential component of students' college preparatory academic development and that communication and collaboration are vital to the success of these partnerships. Consequently, school initiatives, programs, and practices need to encourage teachers in developing and sustaining teacher–parent partnerships that will promote a sense of belonging while also engaging and supporting students in their academic growth and development.

Keywords: teacher-parent, partnerships, parochial, private, college preparatory, secondary education

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Effective teacher–parent partnerships play an important role in the academic preparation and success of college preparatory students (Brueck et al., 2012). These collaborations reflect Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory of human development (BST), which emphasizes how individual and collaborative interactions in a system shape and influence a student's growth and development over time (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Demonstrated through his theory on the ecology of human development, Bronfenbrenner (1979) explained the importance of a child's interaction with teachers and parents and how teacher–parent involvement impacts individual development from childhood to adulthood. In his exploration of the ecology of human development, Bronfenbrenner emphasized that collaborative relationships between school and family systems are instrumental in a student's growth and development (Froiland & Davison, 2014). As societal dynamics change over time, Bronfenbrenner's BST model continues to apply to the ever-changing needs of students and the importance of effective teacher–parent partnerships.

With technology and communication advancements in the 21st century, societal and family trends have also changed (O'Brien et al., 2013). While parents are more involved in the day-to-day lives of their children, secondary educators have transitioned from lecture methods to differentiated instruction and focused on building relationships with students (Kotz, 2016). As a result, collaborative efforts and communication between teachers and parents have drastically increased. For example, using Bronfenbrenner's work as a foundation, it is evident that student growth is enhanced with the presence of effective teacher–parent partnerships (Vickers & Minke, 1995). Consequently, today, teacher–parent partnerships are an essential component of student academic growth and development. Furthermore, Epstein's framework for defining six different

types of parent involvement shows that family, school, and other community systems can help to provide the cooperative process necessary for assisting students in the pursuit of academic success (Bilton et al., 2017).

Societal and family trends, coupled with technology and communication advances in the 21st century, continue to drive the need for effective teacher–parent collaborations (O'Brien et al., 2013). These advancements have also changed how education is provided and delivered. Evidence-based research on the best teaching methods have informed educators that moving from strictly lecture-based instruction to differentiated instruction and focusing on building relationships with students promotes a student's academic growth (Kotz, 2016). For example, using a student-centered approach, educators need to nurture and mentor a student in their academic development.

Consequently, the evidence suggests that teacher–parent partnerships require that educators have effective communication and collaboration skills. However, studies have also shown that some teachers may lack the necessary communication skills and competencies needed for building effective partnerships with parents (Gartmeier et al., 2016). Also, there are sometimes discrepancies between teacher and parental expectations regarding curriculum-centered pedagogies versus student-centered approaches to teaching and learning (Torff, 2015), which can result in a lack of understanding between teachers and parents about student learning processes and teachers' instructional processes. To help to mitigate these discrepancies, teachers need to have the appropriate competencies for developing positive relationships with parents.

Communication and collaboration skills are essential tools for teacher–parent partnerships in all settings, including the parochial college preparatory high school that is the setting for the proposed study. Educating students requires teachers and parents to be integral

parts of student growth and development in the learning process from the time students begin their high school careers until they matriculate to college. Thus, the involvement and support of teacher–parent partnerships are essential parts of parochial college preparatory student academic preparation.

Statement of the Problem

Communication between teachers and parents is a positive predictor of a student's enrollment at postsecondary institutions (Ross, 2016). However, when approaching the best way to address the learning needs of students, teachers' communication styles may convey goals and attitudes dissimilar from parental expectations, resulting in ineffective teacher–parent partnerships (Bang, 2018; Deslandes & Barma, 2016; Lasater, 2016; Torff, 2015). Thus, angst and frustration between teachers and parents can result when teachers lack the skills needed for effective teacher–parent partnerships.

Research has shown that teacher–parent partnerships are a significant part of the academic preparation and success of college preparatory students (Brueck et al., 2012). According to Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory, the overlapping influences of teachers and parents impact student development (Brendtro, 2006; Vickers & Minke, 1995). Teacher–parent partnerships positively influence the growth and development of college preparatory students while encouraging and motivating college-bound students to take ownership and personal responsibility of their academic preparation (Brueck et al., 2012; Romsa et al., 2017; Ross, 2016). In the development of teacher–parent partnerships, communication competencies are essential for secondary educators. Consequently, failed teacher–parent partnerships can be detrimental for college preparatory students (Brueck et al., 2012; Lasater, 2016).

Secondary school educators may lack the competencies necessary for developing effective teacher–parent partnerships (Torff, 2015; Westergard, 2013). Research has shown that secondary educators need competency in collaboration skills to understand their roles and responsibilities in these partnerships. Carter and Healey (2011) identified a disconnect between what secondary educators understood their roles and responsibilities to be and the parents' perceptions of the teacher's roles. Furthermore, when college preparatory educators failed to understand parental roles, responsibilities, and expectations, this created a breakdown in teacher–parent partnerships (Hindin & Mueller, 2016). As a result, issues of trust in teacher–parent partnerships often develop (Deslandes & Barma, 2016).

Avoiding misunderstanding in expectations requires teachers to understand and identify their collaborative roles and responsibilities with parents (Brueck et al., 2012). Therefore, the problem is that secondary educators at the subject school need communication and collaboration competencies necessary for effective teacher–parent partnerships. Understanding the skills teachers need for effective teacher–parent partnerships will help to guide school leaders and systems in the development of policies, programs, and actions encouraging faculty involvement in family partnerships with parents (Epstein et al., 2019).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify secondary educators' perceptions of teacher–parent partnerships that best benefit students. Many teachers at the subject school may not fully understand their role in the context of teacher–parent partnerships (Gartmeier et al., 2016). The results from this study may help to shed light on the expectations and roles of teachers at religiously affiliated college preparatory high schools in the context of teacher–parent relationships. If secondary educators at the subject school possess the necessary skills for

teacher–parent partnerships to thrive, this will directly benefit the academic preparation of college preparatory students.

Research Questions

To better understand the role of teachers in teacher–parent partnerships, the following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What are faculty perceptions of parental involvement in teacher–parent partnerships at parochial college preparatory schools?

RQ2: What are faculty perceptions of the competencies (skills) needed for effective teacher–parent partnerships at parochial college preparatory schools?

RQ3: What are the differences, if any, in new and veteran faculty perceptions of parental involvement in teacher–parent partnerships and the competencies (skills) needed for effective teacher–parent partnerships at parochial college preparatory schools?

Significance of the Study

The intent of this study was to gain an understanding of the communication and collaboration competencies teachers at religiously affiliated college preparatory high schools need for effective teacher–parent partnerships. This research was significant because it provided the opportunity for teachers to identify the skills they need for effective teacher–parent partnerships. Furthermore, gathering data from teachers provided teachers and school administrators insights into the skills most necessary for teacher–parent partnerships in a religiously affiliated college preparatory environment. Also, examining teacher perspectives about the communication and collaboration skills needed for teacher–parent partnerships may enhance the nature of student and teacher relationships and help teachers become more effective

educators in the classroom. Consequently, students may have the opportunity to be more engaged in their academics and become more prepared for college.

Study findings revealed the need for future teacher training and that it can contribute to the development of formalized teacher–parent partnership programs in religiously affiliated college preparatory high schools. Furthermore, study findings emphasized the necessary skills teachers need to develop teacher–parent partnerships that better fit the academic needs of college preparatory students. The study results may be used to assist local, state, and national educational administrators and officials of religiously affiliated college preparatory schools enact teacher–parent initiatives, programs, and practices that will better prepare their students for the academic rigor of college.

Definition of Key Terms

The following terms were used in this study:

College preparatory. This term references a school that designs and implements a curriculum that emphasizes academic skill development and preparation for a student's transition to college (Aldana, 2013).

College preparatory students. These are students who attend schools that design and implement curricula that emphasizes academic skill development and preparation for a student's transition to college. In the present study, the term includes students who were born after 1995, defined as Generation Z (Seemiller & Grace, 2016).

High school parent. A high school parent is any legal guardian responsible to the school for a student in Grades 9 to 12 (Epstein et al., 2019).

High school teacher. A high school teacher is defined as an education practitioner who works directly with students in a classroom setting in Grades 9 to 12 (Epstein et al., 2019).

New teacher. For this study, a new teacher was identified as a parochial college preparatory high school teacher with a state teaching license in a core subject area (math, science, history, and English). They were educators employed at a secondary college preparatory parochial school (identified as School A in this study) with the fewest years of teaching experience. At School A, the years of experience for new teachers in core subject areas range from 2 to 9.

Parochial school. Also identified as a religiously affiliated private primary or secondary school, this type of educational institution integrates the faith and values of a particular faith into the academics and school culture (Gleeson et al., 2018). For the present study, the term acknowledged a Catholic college preparatory high school.

Teacher–parent partnerships. Teacher–parent partnerships involve a trusting and interactive relationship between teachers and parents in which they "mutually agree to defer to each other's judgments and expertise" (Turnbull et al., 2006, p. 110).

Veteran teacher. For this study, a veteran teacher was identified as a parochial college preparatory high school teacher with a state teaching license in a core subject area (math, science, history, and English). They were educators employed at a secondary college preparatory parochial school (School A) with the most years of teaching experience. At School A, years of experience for veteran teachers in core subject areas range from 18 to 42.

Summary

Teachers and parents have influential roles in the development of students. The influential roles of teachers and parents in teacher–parent partnerships aid the academic development of college preparatory high school students (Brueck et al., 2012; Froiland & Davison, 2014). However, for teacher–parent partnerships to thrive in parochial college

preparatory high schools there is a need for educators to understand their attitudes and

competencies in the context of teacher–parent partnerships. The review of the literature in

Chapter 2 provides an in-depth understanding of the significance of teacher–parent partnerships.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an understanding of the theoretical foundation and nature of teacher–parent relationships as they relate to the research questions developed for this study. The literature review provides insights into understanding college preparatory students and their learning preferences. Furthermore, research from empirical studies explains the skills needed for teaching and parenting of today's high school and college preparatory students. Most importantly, this review of the literature uses Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory (BST; 1979) as a foundation for understanding the strengths and challenges in the dynamics of teacher–parent partnerships and their impact on college preparatory students.

Theoretical Framework

A developmental psychologist, Bronfenbrenner's initial ecological theory of development changed the understanding of how individuals interact in the context of their environment (Härkönen, 2007). For example, Bronfenbrenner's research spurred the creation of the federal Head Start program in 1965 for low-income children and families. Later, together with fellow psychologist and researcher Stephen J. Ceci, Bronfenbrenner revised his work to formulate the BST of human development. This theory expanded on the earlier ecological model by providing an understanding of the interactive and influential processes and people that impact a student's growth and development from childhood to early adulthood (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). Today, the expansion of the BST theory focuses on an approach to understanding the environmental influences in the context of an individual's development over a lifespan.

Bronfenbrenner's BST of human development sheds light on the importance of the interactions and behaviors necessary for effective teacher–parent partnerships. As explained by the BST theory, many significant factors are influencing the growth and development of college

preparatory students; these factors highlight the biological, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral characteristics that shape a college preparatory student's learning experiences (Arnold et al., 2012). Additionally, the BST demonstrates the effects of a student's behavior in structured interactions between people include relationships with parents and teachers (Bronfenbrenner, 1975).

Teachers and parents must share and understand a student's learning experiences to communicate the value of learning to students (Hedges & Gibbs, 2005). However, laying the groundwork for student academic success requires teacher and parent collaboration in nurturing the educational and social experiences of college preparatory students (O'Brien et al., 2013). Therefore, Bronfenbrenner's theory expresses the need to examine the relationships between a developing student and the teacher–parent structures in their environment. Furthermore, his approach aids the understanding of the influences of concentric systems of teacher–parent partnerships in the development of college preparatory students.

Structure of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory

According to Bronfenbrenner's BST, the structure provided by teachers and parents helps drive the educational development of a student (Cross, 2017). The BST identifies the reciprocal and interrelated forces identified as concentric systems existing between teachers, parents, and students having direct and indirect influences on student learning and interactions (Tudge et al., 2009). Therefore, teacher–parent partnerships are a significant influence on the academic development of college preparatory students. For example, a student is the product of the mutual interaction between teachers and parents. However, a student's academic growth can be impacted when teacher–parent partnerships or other environmental structures are not in sync with one another. Consequently, an examination of teacher–parent partnerships from a BST

perspective requires an analysis of interrelated, concentric systems that are embedded throughout a child's life.

Bronfenbrenner's theory mirrors the interactive structures at work in teacher–parent partnerships. There are five interrelated systems in the framework of Bronfenbrenner's BST. In a student's developmental process, influences emerge from the interactive structures in microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem structures (Rosa & Tudge, 2013, pp. 246–247). These five concentric structures—the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem—explain the systematic influences, including processes, the student, context, and time in the academic development of college preparatory students (DiBenedetto & Myers, 2016). Through an understanding of the concentric systems, secondary educators can lead a collaborative partnership with parents to help college preparatory students in their academic preparation.

Microsystem

The microsystem is the concentric system most closely related to a student's interaction between parents and teachers. This component of the system involves the direct influences and relationships in a student's life. Furthermore, the microsystem includes teachers and parents, the elements of a student's environment that they will interact with the most (Berk, 2002). According to Bronfenbrenner's theory, teachers and parents are networked microsystems most significantly impacting a student's development (Neal & Neal, 2013). As a result, an examination of the teacher and parent microsystem is essential to understanding the relationship dynamics in teacher–parent partnerships.

Mesosystem

The mesosystem identifies the connections and interactions of family, friends, and other groups that influence the development of a student. Therefore, the microsystem builds upon the mesosystem. The purpose of the mesosystem is to bridge the gap and create a connection to the microsystem (Berk, 2002). The interconnectivity between the microsystem and mesosystem construct and identify teacher and parent social beliefs about education, learning, and educational policy (Mischo, 2014). Mischo's (2014) study showed that the overlapping of the microsystem and mesosystem facilitates the student learning process. Therefore, the mesosystem is an integral meeting point for the development of teacher–parent partnerships.

Exosystem

In the creation of parent partnerships, educators must also understand the exosystem of Bronfenbrenner's theory in teacher–parent partnerships. The exosystem includes the systems and environmental influences with which a student may not yet have direct interaction, but which still impact an individual's growth and development. However, the interpersonal relationships developed through the exosystem are a part of other community social structures, including the politics, the economy, and the society a student will interact with the most (Ceci, 2006). Chun and Devall (2019) demonstrated that interactions of parents with three environmental variables including family, life experiences, and teacher interactions, assist students with academic socialization. Therefore, although the exosystem is not a direct influence on a student's development, it still has a significant influence in the development of teacher–parent partnerships that directly impact a student's academic progress.

Macrosystem

Another layer of interconnectivity in teacher–parent partnerships involves the macrosystem. Bronfenbrenner (1999) identified the macrosystem as societal influences including cultural values, beliefs, traditions, customs, and laws impacting a student's academic development. However, while affecting a student's academic growth, the macrosystem can be influential in the well-being of teachers in teacher–parent partnerships as well. For example, Price and McCallum (2015) showed that social, cultural, and political macrosystem influences had a perceived impact on teacher well-being because of continually changing experiences in culture, society, and the implementation of various educational initiatives. Thus, in response to the macrosystem, teacher well-being, flexibility, and levels of adaptability are essential in teacher–parent partnerships.

Chronosystem

The concentric structure of the chronosystem explains the concept of time in teacher–parent partnerships. This layer of influence identifies the timing of influential and memorable experiences shaping and impacting other developmental processes in all of the other system structures (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). As students mature, they may react differently to changes in environmental structures, which can create a ripple effect on the ways they are influenced by changes (Shelton, 2019). For example, it is necessary to be aware of generational differences over time. In teacher–parent partnerships, teachers need to understand the ever-changing nature of educational practices for meaningful parental collaboration of a student's academic growth.

Proximal Processes

Proximal processes refined Bronfenbrenner's earlier bioecological theory. These proximal processes happen across the concentric systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Rosa & Tudge,

2013). The proximal processes identified as the process-person-context-time (PPCT) component of Bronfenbrenner's BST emphasize the role of a student in the context of additional driving forces in the interconnected systems previously described (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). Furthermore, the processes include the systematic interactions of the concentric systems while individual personal characteristics such as age, gender, and physical and mental health play a role in the interactions with oneself and others. As a result, time is a very influential component in the context of the five systems as a student grows into a young adult and prepares for college.

These proximal processes identify activities including learning, recall, perception, and emotional experiences which nurture an individual's developmental process (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Shelton, 2019). Therefore, these types of processes identify the connections between and among the student, their relationships, and learning experiences. Also, previous experiences construct meaning and adaptability related to a person's future experiences (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). For example, through the identification of proximal processes of development, Bronfenbrenner demonstrated how students evolved and developed in sync with their surrounding influences. The components of PPCT are mutually influenced through personal and environmental characteristics over time. This expansion of Bronfenbrenner's BST framework considers the individual forces and interrelationships of a person in the context and time of their surroundings (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Rosa & Tudge, 2013). Consequently, when striving to meet the developmental needs of students, teachers must be aware of the proximal processes in the microsystem and other system influences to adapt and collaborate with parents in teacher– parent partnerships.

Bronfenbrenner's BST has served as a framework for identifying how relationships in students' lives impact their development. The concentric systems in Bronfenbrenner's

bioecological systems theory provide a foundation for teacher–parent partnerships. Each of these concentric layers of student growth affects their educational development. For example, Hampden-Thompson and Galindo (2017) demonstrated that high levels of school and family relationships boosted the academic success of students. Therefore, secondary educators need to understand a student's learning patterns in the context of the concentric systems to best prepare them for college academics (DiBenedetto & Myers, 2016). Consequently, preparing high school students for college requires collaborative teacher–parent partnerships for the developmental learning processes of students. Thus, teachers need parent partnerships to help facilitate the interaction of concentric systems operating in students.

Today's High School and College Preparatory Students

Education is continually changing to keep in step with student needs. Today's high school and college preparatory students have never known life without technology (Kotz, 2016). These students, also known as digital natives, communicate and connect through technological devices and social media. Furthermore, the integration of technology in the lives of these students has changed how they communicate, interact, and learn (Koltz et al., 2017). With today's students, college preparatory secondary institutions have experienced a transition from classroom lecture methods to a much more collaborative, active, personalized learning experience embracing technology. These students seek learning opportunities that allow them to grow academically through personalized learning experiences. However, the impact of technology in the learning environment can create a discrepancy between teachers and parents about the most effective personalized instructional methods and practices for students (Kotz, 2016). Therefore, the educators who work with college preparatory students continually need to collaborate with parents and adjust their instructional delivery practices to best engage these

students. Consequently, technological changes have influenced the dynamics of teacher–parent partnerships.

Student Learning Preferences

The learning preferences of students in previous generations are vastly different than today's students. Secondary educators and college professors today are constantly seeking alternative classroom instruction methods. Many of these alternative methods include using active learning techniques to engage learners in applying acquired knowledge (Kotz, 2016). Immersed in a society with access to instantaneous information and feedback, today's students also have learning preferences that require processes and experiences that include relational interactions. For example, Kotz (2016) found that today's high school students need engaging learning experiences that reflect their individuality and foster opportunities for engaging and collaborative learning experiences. To experience a sense of belonging and rapport with the subject matter and instructors, these students need an appropriate balance of challenge and support in the academic structure of their classes. Romsa et al. (2017) also found that student satisfaction was higher when college students experienced collaboration, interaction, and support in classroom settings. Thus, student engagement with course content is enhanced when secondary educators work with parents to create alternative learning experiences.

Parents of Today's College Preparatory Students

Parenting trends have significantly evolved since the mid-1980s. Parents are more influential in the lives of their high school students academically, socially, and emotionally than ever before (Kriegbaum et al., 2016). Parenting trends have created shifts in how parents interact and insert themselves in their children's lives. Significant levels of parental involvement did not characterize previous generations. While the terminology of parental involvement can be vague

and explained along a continuum of behaviors, it most appropriately encompasses parent behaviors in school-related academic endeavors that include supervising students while they study, participating in school events, and attending teacher–parent meetings (Fisher, 2016). Goodall and Montgomery (2014) noted that findings from numerous studies indicated shifts in the education continuum reflecting a parent's involvement with a school to direct parental engagement in the child's learning process.

Many parents of high school students are directly invested in the current life events of their children to help ensure their future successes. Furthermore, research has indicated that parental engagement and involvement are significant predictors of adolescent academic performance (Kriegbaum et al., 2016). The parental microsystem provides direct support and influence to the student (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). Thus, these parents provide a greater amount of academic support and encouragement for their children throughout high school when compared to that in previous generations.

Today's parents are also known for creating close relationships with their children through structured supervision; parents have structured the lives of their children while continuing to provide constant guidance, nurturing, and support (Romsa et al., 2017). However, when these youth experience sheltered protection in a structured environment, this can result in a constant reliance on parents and teachers to provide them direction (Koltz et al., 2017). Consequently, lacking communication and time management skills, these students may struggle with accepting personal responsibility for their academic development. As a result, these young people can be in pursuit of parents and teachers to provide engaging, structured, and highly disciplined learning environments for academic success.

Helicopter Parents

Despite this need for structure, an overwhelming amount of parental involvement can be detrimental to students' high school experiences and their preparation for college. Overparenting, also identified as helicopter parenting, is a term used to describe overly protective parents who are highly engaged and invested in the lives of their children (Odenweller et al., 2014). Helicopter parents are in constant communication with their children and intervene in all aspects of their lives. This type of overparenting can be harmful to students and school communities. Locke et al. (2012) identified beliefs and actions that are symptomatic of overparenting, including parents taking responsibility for children, shielding children from disappointment, and a high level of control over students' futures. As a result, helicoptered students develop a sense of entitlement and a lack of personal responsibility. Therefore, helicopter parenting can inhibit the academic growth and development of college preparatory students. Consequently, many students enter college without the appropriate tools needed to address the academic aspects of their higher level learning experience (Vianden & Ruder, 2012). By understanding the causes of overparenting, teachers can implement strategies to better address students' academic needs.

Helicopter parents try to ensure their children's academic motivation and success through their parental perfectionism and anticipatory problem-solving. In this manner, parents can shelter their children from having to deal with adversity by providing a solution to every dilemma. Therefore, children of helicopter parents assume academic motivation will be provided and academic issues will be addressed through parent intervention. Consequently, these children fail to assume responsibility for motivation and ownership of personal academic goals. While studies show that parental involvement can be a strong predictor of a child's academic success, helicopter parenting can hinder a student's intellectual growth and development (LeMoyne &

Buchanan, 2011). For example, children are unable to learn the concepts of academic responsibility and independence when parents complete tasks and solve problems rather than allowing the children to set goals, make choices, and accept the consequences of their actions. As a result, when helicopter parents do too much to ensure their children's academic motivation and success, these children will be less motivated and more reliant on parents to find resolutions for their problems.

Academic Impact of Helicopter Parenting

It is agreed that parents must provide constant support, communication, and intervention in academics for their children to be successful in college. Research has shown that as students prepare for college, the effects of helicopter parenting can impact their academic growth and development. While many parents are exhaustive in their quests to ensure that their children have earned top grades regardless of their abilities to grasp particular concepts, students of helicopter parents lack self-regulation in academia because their parents want to intervene and protect their children from experiencing failure while ensuring their students' academic success (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Some of the stressors affecting college preparedness of helicopter-parented students include a lack of academic self-regulation and communication skills (Aydin, 2017). Thus, learning in a college setting cannot take place until these students have the appropriate academic, emotional, and social skills to balance these stressors in a collegiate environment.

Students of helicopter parents entering college often struggle with academic success (Pedersen & Jodin, 2016). Since helicopter parents have always mitigated and regulated their children's problems, these youth often lack the ability to problem solve when they matriculate to college. Hovering parents become more involved when students do not perform well (Kriegbaum et al., 2016). Provided structure, organization, and self-regulation by their overinvolved parents,

some of these students grapple with academic self-regulation, motivation, and preparedness in college. However, developing these skills is imperative to students' abilities to engage successfully in more intense levels of academics (Hong et al., 2015). A student's ecosystem adapts to the roles and activities experienced through the individual microsystems of parents and teachers (Shelton, 2019). However, high school students of helicopter parents transitioning to college fail to develop academic self-regulation because they depend on parental regulation of their academics. Therefore, teachers in teacher–parent partnerships at college preparatory high schools need to address the academic needs of students, especially students with helicopter parents.

Academic preparedness for college is the focal point for parents of today's students. Ross (2016) indicated that a high level of parent involvement positively influences a students' college enrollment. However, research has also shed light on the detrimental impact of parental overinvolvement in children's academic development (Odenweller et al., 2014). High levels of engagement from helicopter parents can prohibit students from learning academic responsibility, independent goal setting, and problem-solving skills necessary for successful academic transitions to college. Consequently, it is evident that there is a delicate balance between parental involvement and overinvolvement that promotes student academic achievement.

Teaching Today's College Preparatory Students

Teacher–student rapport is an essential component of the academic growth and development of college preparatory students. Martin and Collie (2019) conducted a longitudinal study of 2,079 high school students to examine the impact of teacher–student relationships on these students. The study results indicated that the students felt more supported, motivated, and engaged when they experienced positive teacher–student interactions. Comparatively, secondary

students in Hong Kong noted that positive feedback from teachers and parents increased their academic self-efficacy (Lam & Chan, 2017). Therefore, the evidence suggests that today's students need support, engagement, and motivation from teachers and parents alike in their educational development.

In addition to being open to new teaching and learning styles, educators must also provide engaging learning opportunities in the classroom that apply to real-world experiences. Toothaker and Taliaferro (2017) found that traditional teaching methods in which teachers disseminate content while students take notes is ineffective today Instead, students want more involvement in the learning opportunities provided to them. Sixty-eight high school students ages 15 to 16 years participated in Kotz's (2016) qualitative study on the needs of learners in today's classrooms. Study results indicated that these students desire a sense of order, safety, and security while engaging in small, collaborative classroom learning activities and projects that can be directly applied in everyday experiences. Although today's students prefer highly structured learning environments, Kotz's findings also reflected their preference for more flexibility in homework assignments. Furthermore, in collaborative classroom environments, students are more engaged with interactive lessons that provide opportunities to find creative solutions (Kotz, 2016). Therefore, teachers must provide engaging learning opportunities in the classroom that apply to real-world experiences (Kotz, 2016).

Teaching Strategies for Today's Students

While today's students are known for their academic abilities, they also expect to be successful. These students seek out learning environments that require multitasking and are filled with simulation (Toothaker & Taliaferro, 2017). However, they are also known to become easily frustrated when their academic abilities do not translate into academic success. As a result,

teachers must provide engaging learning opportunities in the classroom that apply to real-world experiences.

Teachers can implement some basic teaching strategies to meet these students' unique academic needs. Some of these strategies include small-group projects, opportunities for peer review, service learning opportunities, and discussions (Kotz, 2016). Other teaching strategies may include case studies conducted in small learning groups in the classroom. Approaches such as these promote student interaction, communication, and personal motivation and help to prepare students for the academic challenges of higher education.

Teacher–Parent Partnerships

Teacher–parent partnerships play an integral role in the academic development of college preparatory high school students. Historically, teachers have been responsible for dealing with academics while parents addressed the social and emotional needs of students at home. However, the roles of parents and teachers now overlap (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Teacher–parent partnerships involve teachers and parents working collaboratively for the benefit of students (Bang, 2018). The BST's mesosystem identifies the need for teacher–parent relationships to encourage and promote students to participate and take ownership in their academic growth (Shelton, 2019). Over time, teacher and parent involvement has increased to address the additional challenges and needs of today's college preparatory students.

Resulting from the ever-changing needs of college preparatory high school students, many secondary educators have seen an increase in parental engagement levels for students transitioning to college. In Hindin and Mueller (2016), teachers identified the need for teacher preparation programs and professional development opportunities to help address various levels of parental involvement. For example, a Colorado high school implemented a transition program

for parents. While teaching parents how to monitor student progress, school guidance counselors showed parents how to build collaborative relationships with teachers (Carter & Healey, 2011). Meanwhile, the school administrators provided training to teachers on how to best address their students' diverse academic needs. Findings from these studies demonstrate a disconnect between what secondary educators think parents should know about high school academics and what parents actually know. Therefore, teachers must cultivate teacher–parent partnerships to best prepare college preparatory students for higher education.

Research such as that conducted by Romsa et al. (2017) has demonstrated that teachers and parents significantly influence student academic growth, retention, and overall satisfaction with the learning process. According to Bronfenbrenner's BST, teacher and parent microsystems must be interconnected through partnerships rather than isolated from one another (Hedges & Gibbs, 2005). Therefore, educators sharing information with parents about students' educational experiences and how they are learning can provide more learning opportunities and communicate the importance of teacher–parent support for student academic development (Epstein et al., 2019; Hedges & Gibbs, 2005). Approaches such as these show that collaborative teacher–parent partnerships can help to motivate and support students in their academic growth and can enhance the academic development of college preparatory students.

The Impact of Teacher–Parent Partnerships

Teacher–parent partnerships impact student learning. Partnerships between teachers and parents are integral to student academic motivation and learning experiences. Frequent teacher–parent communication that include phone conversations, conferences, and student performance updates is vital to creating positive learning attitudes and encouraging students to continue their studies at the college level (Brueck et al., 2012).

Academic growth, retention, and student satisfaction is achieved through trustworthy teacher–parent partnerships (Romsa et al., 2017). As such, trust must be at the foundation of parent–teacher partnerships, and establishing trust is essential in developing the essential components of these collaborative working relationships. Trustworthiness is necessary in teacher–parent partnerships to engage and motivate students in their personal learning experiences (Deslandes et al., 2015). Regular communication between teachers and parents is an essential element in establishing trust in teacher–parent partnerships (Froiland & Davison, 2014). Research has shown that trust in teacher–parent partnerships requires active discussions with collaborative problem-solving procedures between teachers and parents. Meaningful teacher–parent relationships are established when teachers communicate trustworthiness and build rapport with parents by communicating a shared sense of responsibility for student academic success (Deslandes et al., 2015).

Regular teacher–parent communication can encourage students to further their education at the college level (Brueck et al., 2012). Regular and consistent teacher–parent meetings regarding academic challenges, strengths, and overall performance can provide students continuous motivation to pursue academic success. In a qualitative study of 80 college students regarding teacher–parent meetings, the students stated that it was helpful for their parents to be aware of their academic progress (Paul et al., 2018). In a study on the outcomes of teacher–parent meetings, parents and teachers met regularly over 2 years to discuss report card performance and individual student academic progress (Islam, 2019). Study findings showed that the teacher–parent meetings led to parents expending more time, energy, and dedication to monitoring their children's academic progress.

Teacher–parent mesosystems are also significant in student development. As Shelton (2019) explained, shared experiences can facilitate this development's proximal processes. While teachers and parents may have different perspectives, comparing and reflecting on students' education and sharing these experiences over time can assist college preparatory academic development. Regardless of education levels, teacher–parent interaction has been shown to directly improve student academic confidence, attitude, and motivation.

Attitudes and Communication in Teacher–Parent Partnerships

Attitudes and communication skills necessary for effective teacher–parent partnerships have changed over time. Research in the early 1990s shed light on the positive student academic outcomes of teacher–parent partnerships (Epstein et al., 2019). Teacher–parent partnerships have continued evolving since then. The 2002 No Child Left Behind Act, helicopter parenting, and technological advancements have changed the way teachers and parents interact with one another (Epstein et al., 2019; Thompson & Mazer, 2012). For example, as Epstein demonstrated through the overlapping spheres theory, an evolving and changing teacher–parent relationship impacted a student's development (Epstein et al., 2019). Erdener's (2016) study coupled Epstein's overlapping spheres theory and Bronfenbrenner's BST to demonstrate that educators' attitudes are an essential factor in improving parental involvement. The ever-changing needs of parents and students require teachers to be adaptable and flexible in the attitudes needed for supportive and engaging teacher–parent partnerships.

Communication is a key element in teacher–parent partnerships. Teachers' communication skills continue to be recognized as a significant factor in these partnerships. According to Thompson et al. (2015), while more advanced technology encourages communication, parents also have increased expectations about communication from teachers. In

comparison to a previously conducted study by Thompson and Mazer (2012), Thompson et al. found that technology has drastically increased communication between teachers and parents. Westergård (2013) highlighted the significance of communication competence and its connection to establishing positive relationships in teacher–parent partnerships. As Bergeron and Deslandes (2011) demonstrated, strategies for conflict resolution, addressing criticism, and building trusting partnerships with parents are necessary competencies for teachers in creating effective partnerships with parents. Consequently, identifying strategies for meeting parents' needs gives teachers opportunities to build confidence and establish trust when building rapport in teacher–parent partnerships. Bronfenbrenner's BST helps teacher and parents alike understand the direct and indirect influences of the theory's five systems in the context of a student's learning process and needs.

Barriers to Teacher–Parent Partnerships

Because each student has a unique learning style, teachers need to creatively discern the most effective engaging and interactive lesson plans for enhancing student academic development. Barriers to teacher–parent partnerships may impact involvement and appropriate support most applicable for students' learning needs. Therefore, teacher–parent partnerships need to approach each student differently depending on the student's specific academic needs. There is no one specific way to form teacher–parent partnerships. However, teachers often feel they do not have the necessary tools to effectively deal with parents (Hindin & Mueller, 2016; Westergård, 2013). Differences in perspectives regarding what students need can result in miscommunication between how teacher and parent roles are understood and interpreted.

Deslandes et al. (2015) explained that while collaborative teacher–parent partnerships are founded on mutual respect and trust, discrepancies in the shared expectations and fulfillment of

student needs can occur. These discrepancies can create discord and dissatisfaction between teachers and parents. Failed partnerships between teachers and parents can hinder students' learning processes (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Hornby and Lafaele's (2011) teacher–parent relationship model explains some barriers to effective teacher–parent partnerships such as issues with communication styles, differing attitudes, and goals. These issues can impact secondary educators' efforts to balance the learning needs of college preparatory students while building effective teacher–parent partnerships.

Lack of Trust in Teacher–Parent Partnerships

Teacher–parent relationships can be difficult when trust is lacking between educators and parents. For example, when a parent questions the instructional capabilities and professionalism of a teacher or a teacher develops a distrust of a parent's perceived collaborative efforts, conflict can result. Furthermore, teachers often experience dissatisfaction with parents who intervene on behalf of their children when their children exhibit changes in academic performance (Kriegbaum et al., 2016). For example, much to the dismay of teachers, many parents become involved only when responding to their children's poor performance. Teachers and parents often question one another's inadequacies or overinvolvement in a student's academic growth and development (Deslandes et al., 2015). However, when students meet benchmarks for academic success, their parents may reduce their involvement levels.

Lack of trust can result in failed teacher–parent relationships and impact overall student academic achievement. As Westergård (2013) found, trust establishes mutual, positive, and constructive two-way communication in teacher–parent partnerships. As Bronfenbrenner's BST shows, the interconnectedness of teacher–parent microsystems is essential for effective partnerships that benefit students.

Lack of Collaboration in Teacher–Parent Relationships

Teachers and parents can also experience challenges in creating collaborative partnerships that promote student success. Hindin and Mueller (2016) found that collaborative efforts between teachers and parents directly impacted students' academic preparation. However, difficulties in collaborative relationships between teachers and parents can stem from deficiencies in clearly defined teacher and parent roles and expectations (Deslandes et al., 2015). Teachers can become disenchanted with teacher–parent partnerships when tensions and misunderstandings emerge. For example, when parents adopt a client-centered approach and intercede on behalf of their children regarding grades, teachers may experience fears of being judged for teaching capabilities (Deslandes et al., 2015). Likewise, parents may address feelings of inadequacy when teachers express that their children are not meeting necessary academic performance standards. This can result in a lack of congruency among teachers and parents regarding varying degrees of parental involvement (Malone, 2015). A mesosystem of teacher–parent partnerships facilitates a network of shared communication that allows students to take responsibility and engage in their academic growth (Shelton, 2019). Without teacher–parent partnerships, encouraging students to take responsibility for their learning is challenging.

In 2015, Deslandes et al. examined sources of tension that can emerge in teacher–parent relationships. Study results indicated that issues of trust and control appear when teacher–parent collaboration requires sharing responsibilities. While collaborative teacher–parent partnerships are founded on elements of mutual respect and trust, discrepancies in the shared expectations and fulfillment of student needs can occur. As a result, issues of trust versus control can emerge in teacher–parent partnerships. This teacher–parent partnership tension can reflect a lack of understanding between teachers and parents regarding roles and statuses inside and outside the

classroom environment. In contrast, Froiland and Davidson (2014) found that teacher–parent relationships thrive when parents feel welcome at their children's school, experience a sense of trust from faculty, and experience positive interactions with teachers. As Bronfenbrenner's BST demonstrates, the teacher–parent partnership is a microsystem that must be synced to other interlocking and interconnected systems (Shelton, 2019). Consequently, students learning needs can be best addressed by understanding the nature of parental involvement and the significance of collaborative relationships between teachers and parents.

Tools for Positive Teacher–Parent Partnerships

Meaningful teacher–parent relationships are powerful tools in mentoring college preparatory students. Working with parents requires communication skills, time for relationship building, and collaborative and inclusive partnerships (Hedges & Gibbs, 2005). Today's students are more dependent on adults for motivation, guidance, and support. Therefore, they need an appropriate balance of challenge and support in a nurturing environment (Kotz, 2016). Thus, the interactions between teachers and parents in teacher–parent partnerships are significant in the academic growth of these students.

Teacher–parent programs in secondary schools geared toward enhancing student academic outcomes need to include parental expectations (Froiland & Davison, 2014). Furthermore, open communication with a shared understanding and establishment of trust between teachers and parents will aid student learning processes. Regular collaboration between parents and teachers will create learning opportunities that reflect a system of structured checks and balances for these students. For example, in a study by Hindin and Mueller (2016), teachers identified the need for professional development opportunities to help address various levels of parental involvement. Study results showed disconnects between teacher and parents regarding

roles and expectations in teacher–parent partnerships (Hindin & Mueller, 2016). School administrators can provide guidance on procedures and training on the art of teacher–parent relationships to establish effective working relationships that maximize student success (Lasater, 2016). Efforts such as these can provide teachers and parents the necessary tools for mentoring students as they prepare for college.

Teacher–Parent Partnerships at Parochial College Preparatory Schools

In the same way that other types of secondary schools have experienced changing dynamics in student learning preferences and skills needed in teacher–parent partnerships, so too have parochial schools (Warren et al., 2003). Catholic schools, modeled after the Catholic Church's hierarchal structure, are known for their rigid and high academic standards. These high standards reflect strict adherence to clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and individual performance of teachers and students (Warren et al., 2003). Today, while still known for its high academic standards, the Catholic Church has focused on the need to build and expand the faith community in the Catholic school system. Continued integration of faith and values provides a well-rounded, holistic education for students in body, mind, and spirit (Gleeson et al., 2018). Providing a holistic education for each student requires collaboration between teachers and parents to support student learning.

Teacher–parent partnerships at college preparatory Catholic high schools have significant implications for students and their future academic success. In teacher–parent partnerships, teachers complement and mirror the parents' motivation, encouragement, and support of high school students (Blandin, 2017). The interconnectedness of the mesosystem in Bronfenbrenner's BST is pivotal in understanding how teachers and parents at Catholic college preparatory schools can communicate for the students' benefit (Blandin, 2017). Parochial students have higher

achievement levels and positive attitudes toward learning when parents are involved (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Parents are more likely to be engaged in teacher–parent partnerships when they recognize that parochial school teachers are genuinely invested in the success of their students (Vera et al., 2017). Thus, finding ways to facilitate communication in teacher–parent partnerships is an integral component of a student's academic success at a Catholic college preparatory high school.

Teacher–Parent Partnerships and School Culture

Facilitating support and communication is significant in teacher–parent partnerships at parochial schools. Parochial school teachers experience difficulties and opportunities for support and communication in teacher–parent partnerships. While research overwhelmingly supports the idea that students perform better when teachers and parents partner together, parents of students attending parochial schools also believe that the typically smaller size of these schools and the sense of faith and values in the school community more easily foster their involvement and partnerships with faculty and school administrators (Boyle, 2010; Ospino & Weitzel-O'Neill, 2016). This sense of community is essential in building teacher–parent partnerships in Catholic schools. Also, parochial school curricula are infused with a commitment to using a holistic educational approach (Warren et al., 2003). In a holistic approach to education, understanding values in teacher–parent partnerships is of equal importance to communication between teachers and parents. When parochial student parents feel a sense of connection and support for their children's overall growth, they are more likely to engage in teacher–parent partnerships (Vera et al., 2017).

Parochial Teacher Perceptions of Teacher–Parent Partnerships

Parochial teachers' beliefs, assumptions, and perceptions of parental involvement in teacher–parent partnerships can significantly influence the relationships between teachers and parents. For example, Epstein and Dauber (1991) found that teachers who had strong opinions about the positive impact parents could have in students' academic development were more likely to engage parents and involve them in teacher–parent partnerships. Consequently, teachers at parochial schools need to understand the role of parents in teacher–parent partnerships.

However, as Ross (2012) noted, parent participation may also create tension in developing teacher–parent partnerships in parochial school settings. Some teachers struggle with understanding the significant role that parents have in student academic growth (Warren et al., 2003). While teachers and parents at parochial schools may have the same goal of supporting students, teachers may hesitate to recognize the vital role parents play. While the roles and responsibilities of teachers and parents often overlap when it comes to educating students, teachers often fear undefined boundaries and expectations with parents. For example, differences in expectations regarding communication between teachers and parents has been identified as one of the most significant barriers encountered in teacher–parent partnerships at parochial schools (Warren et al., 2003). Parochial school educators often view teacher–parent partnerships from a school perspective and evaluate the partnership based only on how parents can help teachers with their particular children in the classroom. However, parents want and need partnerships that promote equality with parochial school teachers (Warren et al., 2003). Consequently, unequal communication expectations can lead to dysfunctional teacher–parent partnerships in Catholic schools.

There is no one size fits all approach to partnerships between teachers and parents (Rouse & Ware, 2017). Communication at Catholic schools between teachers and parents needs to consist of open, reciprocal relationships (Warren et al., 2003). Hampden-Thompson and Galindo (2017) demonstrated that positive relationships between schools and families provide a powerful combination for a young adult's academic success. Parental involvement is indirectly facilitated when parochial school teachers provide opportunities for collaborative involvement rather than using one-way communication to explain to parents how they can help (Vera et al., 2017). As a result, parents of Catholic school students feel a connection to the integral role they play in their children's learning processes.

Facilitating teacher–parent partnerships at Catholic schools provides a connection between learning experiences at home and those in the school community (Rouse & Ware, 2017). When teachers recognize that parents can be an asset in teacher–parent partnerships, parents feel a connection to the integral role they have in their children's learning processes and want to be engaged in the partnerships. Also, when religiously affiliated schools incorporate faith and values into teacher–parent partnerships, the faith and values provide an essential foundation for collaboration (Warren et al., 2003). As Rouse and Ware (2017) explained, focusing on the essential components of community and values provides a foundation for building a reciprocal relationship between teachers and parents that centers on students' academic development. Furthermore, as Bronfenbrenner's BST emphasizes, young adults grow in the systems of influence as they interact with one another (Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017). Therefore, teachers in college preparatory Catholic schools need to understand their roles in facilitating teacher–parent partnerships that also require professional, open, and collaborative

communication skills with parents. Consequently, integrating communication and values is an ingredient for teacher–parent partnerships that can benefit all college preparatory students.

Summary

Each topic explored in this literature review reflected the significance of teacher–parent partnerships in the academic success of college preparatory students. The structure of Bronfenbrenner's theory was incorporated in explaining the needs of students and parents and the impact of teacher–parent partnerships on college preparatory students. It is evident that discrepancies exist in teacher–parent partnerships, suggesting the need for examining what teachers and parents believe is needed in teacher–parent partnerships in addition to the competencies necessary for teachers in partnerships with parents. However, research on these aspects of teacher–parent partnerships appears limited.

Today's students have different needs and expectations related to their academic growth and development. This generation of high school students seeks a structured, yet supportive learning environment from parents and teachers. Findings from numerous studies emphasize parent–teacher collaboration as an integral factor in student academic achievement. However, teachers and parents must be aware of the barriers that can prohibit or hinder the success of these partnerships. Through open communication, trust, and consistent collaboration, teachers and parents can avoid the pitfalls of teacher–parent relationships.

College-bound students seek a balance of structure and support from teachers and parents. Bronfenbrenner's BST provides a foundation for teacher–parent partnerships that support college preparatory student academic growth. While these students have diverse learning needs, Bronfenbrenner's BST can help teacher and parents alike understand the direct and

indirect influences of the theory's five systems in the context of student learning process and needs.

It is through positive and communication exchanges that teachers and parents can establish a sense of trust and shared responsibility to help motivate and engage students. Commitment and shared responsibility from teachers and parents alike establish a sense of trust (Bang, 2018). As a result, college preparatory students experience a balance of challenge and support from teachers and parents in all academic endeavors.

As shown in the research discussed in this literature review, teacher attitudes and competencies are vital parts of teacher–parent partnerships. Research continues to emphasize the importance of communication, trust, and collaboration in teacher–parent partnerships. These relational components of teacher–parent partnerships influence the academic development of college preparatory students. Teacher–parent partnerships provide the necessary support and structure to help students prepare for college-level academics. Therefore, teachers must avoid the pitfalls of teacher–parent relationships that can hinder the success of college preparatory students.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Teacher–parent partnerships are an essential component of student development (Bang, 2018; Cross, 2017). As Bronfenbrenner's biological systems theory (BST) indicates, educators need to develop partnerships with parents that support students in their academic development (Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017). The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify secondary school educators' perceptions of teacher–parent partnerships that best benefit students. Findings from this study provided insights into how teachers perceive and make meaning of their experiences in teacher–parent partnerships. If teachers understand their roles in teacher–parent partnerships, the working relationship will benefit youth in their preparation for college.

Data gathered for this study provided an understanding of teachers' perceptions of their involvement in partnerships with parents of college preparatory students and the competencies teachers think are necessary for effective teacher–parent partnerships. The study design, including research methods and data collection used to research teacher–parent partnerships at a religiously affiliated college preparatory high school, is detailed in this chapter.

Research Design

A transcendental phenomenological approach was used in this study. Knowledge is gained when research participants describe the meaning of their lived experiences (Creswell, 1998). A phenomenological approach provides the opportunity to collect rich, detailed data about lived experiences (Hopkins et al., 2017; Valentine et al., 2018). For the present study, data were collected from individuals who have directly experienced teacher–parent partnerships. Therefore, the phenomenon's invariant structures identified the essential meanings gathered from the semistructured research interviews with the research participants (see Creswell, 1998). The invariant structures of the teacher-parent phenomenon were identified in the data analysis

process and gathered into meaningful clusters to identify what is experienced and how it is experienced. As Patton (1990) explained, the goal of phenomenological research is to identify the essence of shared experiences that underlie the variations existing in these experiences. Through sharing their personal experiences, teacher participants provided their perceptions of the skills necessary for teacher–parent partnerships.

Transcendental phenomenology is a qualitative research approach used to understand the human experience. Making meaning of lived experiences is at the root of transcendental phenomenology (Moerrer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). As Moustakas (1994) explained, a transcendental phenomenological approach intertwines the discovery and meaning of the phenomenon being studied and what is perceived within a person's experiences. This approach provides the opportunity to discover the perceptions of experiences just as they appear to the research participants (Moustakas, 1994). In the present study, the elements of transcendental phenomenology guided the overall inquiry and helped to organize and analyze the meaning of teachers' perceptions of teacher–parent partnerships.

Phenomenological studies provide in-depth perspectives about research problems from the perspectives of participants directly involved in the daily functioning of a structure or organization (Aaltio & Heilmann, 2012); in this case, in the context of the school setting, a secondary college preparatory parochial school. Through semistructured interviews, I evaluated and analyzed the impact of Bronfenbrenner's BST mesosystem on student academic development. I explored, investigated, and furthered the understanding of the interconnectedness of teacher–parent partnerships through first-person accounts in order to answer this study's research questions.

Research Method

Through a phenomenological approach, the dynamics of teacher–parent partnerships were explored and addressed in the context of School A, a college preparatory parochial high school. This type of study allows researchers to explain, explore, or describe a culture, situation, or set of behaviors in their environments (Herr & Anderson, 2014). Using an interpretative paradigm, researchers can use semistructured interviews to better understand their study methodologies (Leavy, 2017). Furthermore, data gathered through qualitative methods provide researchers opportunities to gather rich and diverse descriptions from study participants (Aaltio & Hellmann, 2012). Using semistructured interviews allows for acquiring the data needed to analyze, interpret, and construct knowledge about the research problem.

There are many advantages to this type of study. When gaining more insights about a problem of practice, qualitative research provides the opportunity to examine a specific organization's problem of practice through a lens of personal experiences (Saldaña & Omasta, 2017). Furthermore, through qualitative inquiry, researchers can better understand the meaning of behaviors and experiences of individuals and groups (Creswell, 2013). In the present study, collecting qualitative data provided insights into faculty perceptions of teacher–parent partnerships and the impact of these partnerships on student academic success at religiously affiliated college preparatory high schools.

Study Setting

School A, a Catholic college preparatory high school, is located in an affluent county in a southeastern U.S. state. Accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), School A adheres to the state and national standards set forth by SACS. School A is also a part of a diocese. A diocese is identified as a territory overseen by a religious leader, also

known as a bishop. In administrative practices, School A also adheres to the diocese's education policies and regulations. In a diocese, there are multiple parishes run by priests. However, while many parishes have elementary or high schools connected to their churches, School A is not affiliated with a particular parish. Consequently, the diocese provides limited funding for School A's operations. The advancement office at School A generates the majority of the school's operational funds through tuition, fundraisers, and adopt-a-student tuition assistance programs.

Population

The population for this study consisted of teachers from School A, which has 35 teachers and 12 staff members. Nine of the teachers and faculty are graduates of this high school. Thirty-two of the teachers are certified by the state in their subject areas. Forty-two of the 47 faculty and staff members identify with School A's religious affiliation. The other five represent another religious affiliation or no religious affiliation.

At the time of this study, School A's student body consisted of 501 students in grades 9 through 12, with approximately 125 students per class. Of these students, 375 identified with the school's religious affiliation, while 126 students identified with another religious affiliation or no affiliation at all.

Study Sample

Purposive sampling was used to select the study participants. Data were gathered from educators at School A who teach core subjects including math, science, history, and English in grades 9 through 12. Based on their years of experience, state-certified core subject teachers were asked to participate in the study. I contacted School A's principal to explain the study and the need for research participants. I also asked the principal about each faculty member's years of experience. I then identified teachers who fit the criteria of the research study population,

communicated the study purpose to them, and requested their voluntary participation in a semistructured interview about their perspectives on teacher–parent partnerships. Teachers with the least experience were identified as new teachers. At School A, new teachers in core subject areas range in experience from three to nine years. Teachers with the most experience were identified as veteran teachers. These teachers had 18 to 42 years of experience in core subject areas. To establish a clear understanding about the teachers' perceptions of the skills they need for teacher–parent partnerships, teachers who are also parents of students in grades 9 through 12 at School A at the time of this study were not included. The teacher participants ranged in age from 23 to 76 years.

Through purposive sampling, research participants can provide specific information about the phenomenon of interest; in this case, teacher–parent partnerships. Data gathered through purposive sampling is helpful when synthesizing the details of participant experiences (Suri, 2011). This type of sampling also provides the opportunity to examine the data through a lens of personal experiences (Saldaña & Omasta, 2017). Data gathered from School A about teacher–parent partnerships were explained through the personal perspectives and experiences of new and veteran teachers.

Based on the study purpose, individual semistructured interviews with five new teachers and five veteran teachers provided a comprehensive understanding of the participants' perceptions of teacher–parent partnerships. This sample size followed Patton's (1990) guidance regarding the number of cases that researchers can learn the most from. However, the number of interviews needed may slightly vary depending on the level of data saturation. For example, new data may continue to confirm themes, patterns, relationships, and conclusions that were already identified (Suter, 2011). Continued data collection will only confirm an understanding of the

emerging information. The 10 semistructured interviews provided enough narrative data to gain an understanding of the themes and patterns in teacher–parent partnerships at School A.

Qualitative Data Collection

Data for this study were collected through one-on-one semistructured interviews with five new teachers and five veteran teachers. Semistructured interviews provide researchers the opportunity to find meaning through the voices of research participants (Suter, 2011). Personal interviews provide first-hand experiences and insights into skills, values, and norms related to the problem of practice in an organization (Leavy, 2017). Face-to-face interviews also allow researchers to evaluate visual cues and responses when interpreting the data. Furthermore, semistructured interviews provide researchers opportunities to analyze the verbal and nonverbal communication of the participants and make any necessary adjustments throughout the interview process. Through semistructured interviews, feedback from one-on-one interviews helps to pinpoint more specific and detailed insight related to the research questions (Aborisade, 2013).

After receiving permission to conduct this study from Abilene Christian University's institutional review board (see Appendix A), I met with School A's principal to request permission to conduct the study at this school. I also asked the principal for information about each teacher's years of experience. After I identified five new and five veteran teachers at School A who met the study criteria are identified, I delivered a formal letter to each requesting their participation (see Appendix B). The letter outlined the study purpose and invited them to participate in a semistructured interview with me.

After the teachers provided verbal and written consent, I conducted semistructured interviews in a location at School A chosen by each participant and at a scheduled time conducive to the participant's schedule. Conducting the interview in a location selected by each

participant and at a time identified as convenient helped to put the participants at ease with the interviews. Each participant was identified by an assigned pseudonym for confidentiality and privacy purposes.

Each interview was audio recorded. I also took notes during and after each interview as a way to identify personal biases and assumptions about what I already know of teacher–parent partnerships at School A. All digital data were stored at two secure web-based locations. Transcriptions were stored at Otter.ai. All interview recordings, transcriptions, and coding were stored on a flash drive only accessible to me. All data related to this study will be securely stored for five years following study completion, after which they will be destroyed.

Instruments

The semistructured interviews consisted of 15 to 20 questions directly related to teachers' perceptions of their experiences of teacher–parent partnerships (see Appendix C). The interviews ranged from 1 hour to 1.5 hours in length. The semistructured interview format followed the guidelines prescribed by McNamara (n.d.). Prior to each interview, I reviewed the study purpose, addressed confidentiality, and explained the interview format and length. I also asked the participants if they had any questions about the process and provided my phone number and email address if they had any future inquiries about the study. If the participants agreed to be interviewed, they signed the consent form. They were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

For this study, rather than using a preestablished survey instrument, specific questions related to the research questions were developed. The interview questions were adapted from previous teacher and parent partnership studies to reflect the research questions in this study. A panel of experts reviewed the interview questions prior to the participant interviews. This

consisted of individuals in education and related fields with the experience necessary for evaluating the questions and was a necessary part of preparing for this study. The panel members assisted with additions, revisions, and edits of the interview questions.

Using an expert panel can provide insights about research methods or protocols that need to be addressed prior to the actual study or the effectiveness of the data gathering techniques (Chenail, 2011). Based on their knowledge and expertise, the panel of experts for this study evaluated the study protocols to determine if the proposed data gathering methods would provide trustworthiness for this study. The panel members helped me identify interview questions that were too ambiguous or difficult to understand and unnecessary questions that are unrelated to the research questions and provided recommendations for questions needing to be added or revised. Then, I edited using the feedback from the panel members.

Using an expert panel provided perspectives of other experts in the field of education. Furthermore, this approach helped me gain insights into my personal biases and also an appreciation for the vulnerability of the research participants to express themselves (Chenail, 2011). Using a panel of experts to review and provide feedback regarding the interview questions helped to ensure an ethical and responsible approach to conducting the participant interviews.

Field Notes

I used a notebook to journal field notes during the semistructured interviews. I also documented each interview's location, date, and length, as per Saldaña and Omasta (2017). Further, I wrote initial observations about each participant's responses during the interviews. The same notebook was used to document any follow-up observations at the culmination of each interview.

Data Analysis

Data analysis facilitates understanding the context of the research problem. When gaining more insight about the research questions, data analysis helps researchers examine a problem of practice through a lens of personal experiences (Saldaña & Omasta, 2017). However, while researchers do not seek to generalize the findings, data analysis helps to understand and interpret the dynamics of how the research participants explain the research problem in the context of their environment (Aaltio & Heilmann, 2012).

The data analysis process for the present study first called for reading the transcribed interviews to gather an understanding of each participant's thoughts, ideas, and experiences. Theme coding, in vivo coding, and process coding were then used to identify significant statements, phrases, and words. This process provided different angles from which to analyze the data and allowed me to link the appropriate categories and themes for a comprehensive analysis of the data. It also provided insights into understanding the role of Bronfenbrenner's BST and the research questions of this case study in the context of teacher–parent partnerships.

Data Analysis Procedures

The interview data were transcribed using Otter Voice Notes, a web-based computer program that automatically transcribes interviews in real time (Otter.ai, 2020). The data from the transcribed interviews were synched through an encrypted connection and then stored in a secure center containing physical and electronic security for the data. I also reviewed and edited the interview transcriptions for accuracy after they were completed.

I manually coded the data to analyze the information from the interviews. The purpose of coding is to identify and summarize words or phrases that can be used to depict the research participants' experiences (Saldaña, 2013). Coding requires researchers to organize, identify, and

evaluate data based on findings from an established research problem. As Leavy (2017) indicated, this step-by-step process involves immersion into the coding process to identify and extract patterns and themes. Through this systematic process, coding can help researchers better understand the context of a particular situation being studied (Herr & Anderson, 2014). As a result, they are able to unlock repetitive themes throughout the data from identifying words, phrases, and experiences discussed by the research participants.

While data from interviews may provide information about similarities or differences, researchers must take further action to understand the data in the context of the research problem (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Coding provides a way for researchers to categorize and link themes together to determine the implications of the data in connection with the problem of practice (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Thus, the information generated from coding can be used to provide insight into the research questions.

I used coding to simplify the data and to understand and interpret it. Prior to coding, I reviewed all transcribed interviews and confirmed the transcription accuracy with the research participants. Following this, I read through each transcript to gather an initial understanding of the overarching themes that were repeated across the interviews. I then reread the transcripts and evaluated each line by line. This helped me draw conclusions related to the research questions and elicit ideas for further study.

Theme Coding

In qualitative research, theme coding helps identify patterns of similarities and patterns with what people say and do (Nowell et al., 2017). Furthermore, through key words, phrases, and descriptions, identifying similarities and patterns helps researchers better analyze the research questions. Therefore, integrating different coding throughout data analysis naturally emphasizes

the significant themes and concepts related to the research problem (Nowell et al., 2017). Theme coding allowed me to see similarities and differences in the experiences of teachers in teacher–parent partnerships and to identify the competencies teachers need in these partnerships. I read through each interview to gather an initial understanding of the overarching themes repeated across the interviews. I then identified key words reflecting phrases or sentences in order to categorize the data that emerged from patterns, following guidance from Saldaña and Omasta (2017).

In Vivo Coding

I used in vivo coding to complete another pass through each interview transcription. This coding approach provides a thorough summary of significant words, thoughts, and actions of the participants directly related to the research problem. In vivo coding makes researchers more aware of the details verbalized by the research participants and ensures that essential words and details do not get lost in the coding process (Saldaña & Omasta, 2017). By maintaining the integrity of the interviews, in vivo coding helps to minimize research bias when analyzing interview transcriptions (Leavy, 2017). Furthermore, this type of coding provides researchers opportunities to watch themes naturally emerge (Leavy, 2017). Using in vivo, I gathered more details about the themes and began identifying specific theme categories by coding significant parts of the conversations exactly how the participants depicted their experiences.

Process Coding

I completed a third pass through each interview transcript using process coding. Also identified as action coding, process coding seeks to identify the actions, reactions, and interactions of the participants being studied (Saldaña & Omasta, 2017). The participant's actions are identified using a gerund to describe a particular action. Process coding was helpful

in identifying and labeling interactions between teachers and parents. This coding approach allowed me to examine study participants' thoughts and perceptions and to provide insights into the actions, interactions, and reactions of teachers in teacher–parent partnerships.

Methods for Establishing Trustworthiness

Establishing trustworthiness requires addressing the four components of validity: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Terrell, 2016). Consideration given to the four elements of validity ensures that readers can trust a study's rigor and validity. Establishing trustworthiness also demonstrates the accuracy of study results (Creswell, 2014). Credibility provides researchers an opportunity to examine an accurate picture of the phenomenon being studied. Therefore, one way credibility was established in the present study was by obtaining consent from each research participant. Study participants were asked for their consent before their participation. The consent process allows these participants to ask questions or withdraw themselves from the study at any time. Through this process, I built trust and credibility with the research participants.

Additionally, member checking provides research participants the opportunity to review their interview transcription to ensure the accuracy of the collected data (Shenton, 2004). Data that have been meticulously analyzed provide researchers the opportunity to reflect and understand the implications of the research. I also requested the assistance of an expert panel to review and provide feedback on the interview questions used in this study. Thus, the information from the data collection process provided meaning and perspective for this study.

Transferability explains how the findings of one study can be generalized to other situations (Shenton, 2004). In the present study, while the participants' stories and experiences were not directly generalizable, it was essential that I provided full, rich, and detailed

descriptions of teacher–parent partnerships so that readers can understand this study's meaning in similar contexts. However, readers must consider transferability in the context of the number of organizations that participate, restrictions in the type and number of participants who contributed data, the data collection methods used, and the overall length of the data collection process (Shenton, 2004). Using transferability, similar studies using the same data collection techniques could shed light on teacher–parent partnerships in different environments.

Dependability requires that future researchers are able to replicate the study even if the findings are different (Shenton, 2004). Researchers must provide descriptions of the research and how it was carried out, clearly identify the data gathering process, and evaluate the effectiveness of the research design. I provided in-depth explanations on how the study was conducted so that its design can be modeled in future studies.

The process of confirmability involves the researcher's objectivity. Researchers need to identify their perspectives and biases before engaging in data analysis and interpretation (Shenton, 2004). Triangulation reduces researcher bias and is a significant component in the confirmability of research. Applying the principle of triangulation also encompasses data using diverse methods (Saldaña & Omasta, 2017). In the present study, triangulation included having the interview questions reviewed by an expert panel and individual participant reviews of interview transcriptions to ensure accuracy. Triangulation also incorporated bracketing. Bracketing allowed me to use reflexive comments in notetaking throughout the interviews to identify my personal thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of the feedback provided by the study participants.

Researcher's Role

Researchers must evaluate how their position may impact the outcomes of their research (Darawsheh, 2014). I am a graduate of School A as well as a 16-year employee at the time of this study. My roles included teaching seniors, overseeing a new teacher mentoring program, serving on the school accreditation team, and working as a game administrator in the athletic department. I have direct contact with faculty daily, and my interactions and personal biases may have had a subtle impact on the participant responses. My spouse was the assistant principal at the time of this study, which may have resulted in some participants being more reserved or hesitant about expressing their thoughts based on my position as a colleague. Therefore, I worked to ensure participant confidentiality. To do so, all participants were identified with pseudonyms to protect their identities. When analyzing the data from the interviews, it was essential that I acknowledged and understood my personal biases in the context of this study.

Bracketing

Bracketing requires researchers to identify the ways that their personal experiences and interpretations of lived experiences can influence data interpretation and analysis (Fischer, 2009). Bracketing helps researchers put away thoughts, perceptions, and opinions about what they already know. As a researcher who also teaches at School A, bracketing was necessary for addressing my personal biases and assumptions about what I already knew about teacher–parent partnerships at the school. My biases were acknowledged yet limited in the context of the data analysis. For example, as a teacher at School A, I was cognizant of personal thoughts and experiences related to teacher–parent partnerships. I also sought to refrain from influencing participant responses and interpretation of the transcribed interviews, as per Saldaña and Omasta (2017).

I bracketed in various ways throughout this study. My notes made during and after each semistructured interview included reflexive comments. I used these reflexive comments to identify my personal thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of the responses from the study participants (Chan et al., 2013). During data collection, this reflexive notetaking allowed me to identify possible biases and influences. During data analysis, I used bracketing to help prevent distortion and misinterpretation of the data provided in the interviews (Chan et al., 2013). I also followed up with the research participants to determine the accuracy of their interview transcriptions and the accuracy of my analysis to ensure that it reflected their experiences in teacher–parent partnerships.

Ethical Considerations

Researchers must ensure that they ethically bridge the gap between the work of the participants and the academic research (Aaltio & Heilmann, 2012). Therefore, to protect the research participants, appropriate procedures must be in place to ensure privacy. For the present study, all participants were emailed a letter about the study that invited them to participate. The letter outlined information about the study and included information about voluntary and confidential participation. Names or other identifying pieces of participant information were removed from the transcribed interviews, and the participant names were changed to protect their identity. All data were stored in a secure location away from the research site.

Transparency is another essential element in study ethics. It includes notifying study participants about the study purpose and how the data will be analyzed and interpreted (Darawsheh, 2014). Transparency also requires researchers to exercise reflexivity in their actions while collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data. Both aspects were upheld in the present study. I was constantly aware of the influences that existed in this study's context as these influences

could have impacted the research process, and I notified all study participants about the study purpose and how I would analyze and interpret the data. Finally, the Abilene Christian University institutional review board approved this study before data collection began. This process is also an essential component of transparency.

Assumptions

Throughout the study, I assumed that the collected data were valid and reliable. The validity of the data gathering procedures provide for a credible study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). As previously discussed, validity and reliability require triangulation of the data, which also ensures more dimensions and additional perspectives (Saldaña & Omasta, 2017), and a thick description of experiences gathered from the participants that are transcribed directly as they are recorded (Creswell & Miller, 2000). I assumed that the interviews I conducted were representative of the participant experiences in teacher–parent partnerships and that the participants would be honest and forthcoming in their responses. Further, I assumed that the detailed descriptions I provided would establish credibility with readers, who will be able to relate to the experiences being described in the context of the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Limitations

Given my position as an educator at School A and the potential for personal bias, the transcribed responses from the interviews may not have fully captured all of the participants' thoughts and experiences about teacher–parent partnership experiences. Informing research participants about the nature and purpose of the study helped to diminish the impact of this limitation. Additionally, the data gathered from this study only apply to religiously affiliated college preparatory high schools with similar demographics. Teachers in teacher–parent partnerships at other types of high schools may have drastically different perspectives. Thus, the

findings from this study are only representative of teachers at this religiously affiliated college preparatory high school.

Delimitations

Some delimitations existed in this study. Although the goal was to gather information regarding teachers' perceptions of communication in teacher–parent partnerships, parental perspectives in teacher–parent partnerships were not considered. Furthermore, the data collected from this study relied on honest responses from teachers and their personal experiences from working with parents at religiously affiliated college preparatory schools. While the experiences and needs of new and veteran teachers at School A of teachers in teacher–parent partnerships were compared, comparing the needs of teachers and parents in teacher–parent partnerships were not part of this study's scope.

Summary

This chapter provided insights into how this qualitative study was conducted. Using a phenomenological research design, I addressed the research questions about the teachers' perceptions of teacher–parent partnerships and the skills teachers need when working in partnerships with parents. In this chapter, I described the research design and method, population, and sample that were used and identified the materials needed to conduct the study and the data collection and analysis procedures. The specific data collection method was semistructured interviews with 10 teachers about their thoughts and experiences with teacher–parent partnerships. Through the coding process, participant feedback was analyzed to discern their perspectives. This chapter also provided a description of how I established trustworthiness and this study's ethical considerations. Being aware of the study assumptions, limitations, and

delimitations, I was able to provide a stronger analysis and identification of common themes in the research participants' experiences.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to identify secondary educators' perceptions of teacher–parent partnerships that best benefit students. Through semistructured interviews of new and veteran teachers at School A, data were collected that depicted the phenomenon of teacher–parent partnerships from the perspectives of teachers who are involved in them. Study participants were asked to describe their perceptions of teacher–parent partnerships in the environment of School A, a religiously affiliated college preparatory school.

This chapter is a summary of the data collection process and the analysis of data acquired from semistructured interviews of five new and five veteran teachers at School A. The themes that emerged from the data on teacher–parent partnerships are discussed in detail. Comments from the teachers that reflect each theme are presented in tables.

Summary of the Data Collection Process

The data gathering process consisted of conducting semistructured one-on-one interviews with five new and five veteran teachers at School A. New teachers were identified as state-certified teachers who taught a core subject and had the least years of experience at School A. Veteran teachers were state-certified teachers who taught a core subject and had the most years of experience teaching at School A. The interview questions were adapted from previous research studies (Frechette, 2019; Garrett, 2016) and were designed to capture an understanding of the essence of the participants' lived experiences of teacher–parent partnerships at School A. An expert panel reviewed and revised the interview questions as needed. After the interviews were conducted, they were transcribed and coded. Inductive analysis was used to identify emergent themes. The following research questions guided this process:

RQ1: What are faculty perceptions of parental involvement in teacher–parent partnerships at parochial college preparatory schools?

RQ2: What are faculty perceptions of the competencies (skills) needed for effective teacher–parent partnerships at parochial college preparatory schools?

RQ3: What are the differences, if any, in new and veteran faculty perceptions of parental involvement in teacher–parent partnerships and the competencies (skills) needed for effective teacher–parent partnerships at parochial college preparatory schools?

Answers to these questions are explained in the context of the participant profiles and interview summaries in addition to the themes that emerged from the data analysis.

Participant Profiles and Interview Summaries

This chapter includes participant profiles for a deeper understanding of the essence of their lived experiences. Synopses of the interviews provide insights into the lived experiences of teacher–parent partnerships at School A. Pseudonyms were assigned to protect the participants' identities. Table 1 is an overview of the participant profiles, including whether they are a new or veteran teacher, years of experience at School A, number of years as a secondary educator, and the state-certified core subject area in which they teach. All data are reported as current at the time of this study.

Table 1

Participant Profiles

Pseudonym	Teaching status	Years as a secondary school educator	Years at School A (range)	State-certified subject area
Martha	New	9	1–10	Math
Brian	Veteran	31	20–30	Science
Bruce	Veteran	22	20–30	Math
Terrence	New	3	1–10	English
Christian	New	2	1–10	History
Pablo	New	9	1–10	History
Beverly	Veteran	28	30–40	English
Dorothy	Veteran	30	20–30	Science
Becky	Veteran	14	10–20	English
Christine	New	7	1–10	History

The individual background information provided by each of the study participants contributed to a more in-depth and comprehensive understanding of their perceptions of teacher–parent partnerships at School A. Some participants acknowledged that they had previously not stopped to analyze the impact of teacher–parent partnerships in a college preparatory parochial environment. While some of the participant responses were very diverse, their shared experiences helped me understand the essence of their experiences in teacher–parent partnerships at School A.

Martha

Martha is in her ninth year as a high school educator. Before teaching at School A, she spent seven years teaching in the public school system. She teaches math and science courses in grades 9–12. Martha is a School A graduate, is in her second year as a teacher there, and teaches freshmen algebra courses.

When I asked Martha about her perceptions of parental involvement in teacher–parent partnerships at School A, she emphasized the importance of communication with students at the start of the school year and identified communication as a way to "frontload" expectations for students in the classroom experience. Martha explained that she takes additional time to communicate the learning goals in a positive manner so the students know she wants them to be successful in their courses. As a result of this frontloading with students who will then communicate with the parents, she believes parents are more supportive when they can easily understand and know the course expectations.

Martha identified the "sandwich method" as a competency she feels is most important for faculty to use in teacher–parent partnerships. This method is a positive communication tool Martha learned from another teacher at a previous school. First, the teacher communicates something the child is doing well. The teacher then expresses an academic or behavioral concern and concludes with a positive statement about working together to help the student achieve personal goals.

Martha often uses the sandwich method when reaching out to parents in emails, in telephone conversations, or in face-to-face meetings. She believes this method is fundamental in demonstrating to parents the expectation that the child will be successful. Additionally, using this

method sends a message to the parents that the teacher is flexible and adaptable in helping the student meet the course expectations while achieving personal goals.

Martha has no formal training on teacher–parent partnerships. What she has learned about these partnerships, she has learned through experience. She said that over time, she learned the importance of reaching out early and often with parents. While she does worry about a parent possibly misunderstanding the concerns she is trying to communicate about the student, this concern exists because of the challenge of figuring out the best course of action for helping each student be successful in their college preparatory coursework.

Brian

Brian is a veteran science teacher of 31 years, 28 of them at School A. Brian is also a School A graduate and has only taught in private Catholic college preparatory schools. He has taught a variety of science courses, including honors and advanced placement courses, for students in grades 9–12. He has also been involved as a soccer coach, game administrator, and faculty representative through the school's athletic department.

In his interview, Brian emphasized the vital role of parents in their children's lives and said that teacher–parent partnerships are the most beneficial when initiated by parents. Brian's perceptions of parents in teacher–parent partnerships at School A are that while there is no one specific solution to addressing student needs, parents need to begin the conversation in these partnerships. "As far as I'm concerned, I usually wait for the parents to call and ask for advice. I don't initiate . . . " Brian believes parents need to initiate the teacher–parent partnerships because doing so helps students understand the significance of having a strong college preparatory academic foundation.

[I] would say the biggest impact you see is when the parents can give the students a reason why they need to do what they're doing . . . and the parents are emphasizing how important it is that they do well in school. And the students sometimes need to see and understand it a little more clearly and directly than others.

In the context of teacher–parent partnerships, Brian also believes students have to be receptive and willing to address academic issues. Brian's preference would be for a student to initiate the need for intervention and request help from the parents and teacher.

Brian stressed the importance and need for teachers to have practical communication skills when parents reach out. He believes rapid responses to parent emails and face-to-face communication are essential for effective teacher–parent partnerships. Brian prefers that parents reach out via email to set up meetings in which students' needs are collaboratively discussed. However, he emphasized that, depending on the student's needs, it may not be necessary to have the student present at the meeting as sometimes parents will share some personal information that sheds light on a reason the student may be struggling academically.

Brian does not have any formal training in teacher–parent partnerships and believes that these partnerships are not widely discussed among educators or administrators. Rather, there is an unspoken expectation that, whether in their first or last year of teaching, educators will automatically know how to communicate with parents. While Brian feels he has administrative and guidance department support at School A, he believes teachers need practical methods to help them facilitate teacher–parent partnerships. Brian would like to see teacher training on practical methods for developing and using effective communication skills in teacher–parent partnerships.

Bruce

As a 22-year veteran teacher, Bruce has taught math courses in Grades 9–12, including honors and advanced placement courses. Before teaching at School A, Bruce also spent five years in administration. All of his teaching and administrative experience has been in private Catholic schools. In addition to teaching, Bruce has been involved as an advisor for student organizations and has coached various athletic teams at the junior varsity and varsity levels.

Bruce defined teacher–parent partnerships as proactive meetings that need to take place when students are struggling academically and the teachers and students are having difficulty remedying the situations. He believes that these meetings help teachers, students, and parents examine what is not happening and what should be happening. However, before these meetings, Bruce said it is crucial that students and parents know the objectives and expectations that are outlined in the classroom learning experience. He said he is a "big believer in the concept of trust and that everybody knows we're on the same page." This quote from Bruce also reiterates his thoughts about the importance of needing parents as a part of the conversation because high school students are "evolving adults."

Most importantly, Bruce believes that all teacher–parent partnerships must include teachers, parents, and students working together. When teachers, parents, and students are involved in these partnerships, then everyone is helping to identify and communicate student needs. Consequently, establishing a trusting and collaborative relationship is essential for effective teacher–parent partnerships.

Bruce emphasized that teachers need specific competencies (skills) for effective teacher–parent partnerships, including conflict management and conflict resolution skills. He said that trust in these relationships emerges from the ability to deal with diverse students and parents in

collaborative partnerships. However, Bruce believes that teachers also need to provide immediate feedback about academic progress to parents and students. He said, "You have to respond. You might as well do it in a positive, proactive way. You can't put anything off, and you can't avoid." Bruce thinks teachers often become fearful of having to interact with parents and therefore prefer to avoid communicating them and with students outside of the classroom experience.

Bruce identified patience, tolerance, and acceptance of diverse learning needs as essential competencies for effective teacher–parent partnerships. He summarized that teacher–parent partnerships could be useful when focused on these skills because relationship growth is the teacher's job in partnerships with parents and students. In teacher–parent partnerships, positive and proactive relationships will make conflict management and conflict resolution significantly easier.

Upon reflecting on his training for working with parents, Bruce did not recall any conflict resolution or other types of training he has had that would provide specific skills for faculty to use in teacher–parent partnerships. However, he believes a training program where the parents and educators learn together may be worthwhile for developing teacher–parent partnerships. Additionally, Bruce said the guidance department staff at School A is a helpful resource when navigating through difficult teacher–parent partnerships.

At the end of his interview, Bruce emphasized that School A has teachers, staff, and administrators who are working together for student success and that this happens as a result of people understanding that teaching is more than just a job and by identifying teaching as a vocation and essential to the faith and values communicated at the school. As a result of this understanding and identification, Bruce believes teachers are more likely to engage in teacher–

parent partnerships because they have a passion and dedication for teaching and working with students.

Terrence

Terrence is a graduate of School A and a new teacher. He has taught English at School A for three years, served on multiple academic committees, gained experience through coaching, and advised some student organizations. During his interview, he said his involvement in and outside the classroom has helped him develop stronger teacher–parent partnerships.

Terrence depicted teacher–parent partnerships much like a puzzle being pieced together. He described these partnerships as coordinated relationships where teachers and parents work together to figure out how to help students improve. However, Terrence indicated that the partnership relates not just to academics but also to the whole student. "Prioritization of a whole student and seeing that they're not just a grade, that's a big part of it" [teacher–parent partnerships].

As a new teacher, Terrance believes it is the teacher's responsibility to reach out and engage parents when students are struggling to reach appropriate academic benchmarks. He also said that teacher–parent partnerships need to include parents because "parents need to communicate things students can't communicate." For example, if there is a personal issue the student is dealing with, and the parent communicates this with Terrence, he may have some additional insights or solutions for better assisting the student. Terrence believes he practices open communication with parents and invites parents to have a conversation with him when he experiences or the parent understands that the student is struggling. He said it is difficult to reach out to all parents due to time constraints and that he would like to be able to communicate more with parents whose students are meeting or exceeding the academic goals in his English classes.

While sharing his experiences about teacher–parent partnerships, Terrence expressed strong feelings regarding the importance of communicating with parents to support students' well-rounded development in body, mind, and spirit. He repeatedly discussed the need for teachers to initiate and continue communication in teacher–parent partnerships at School A. He stated that teachers cannot be afraid to make mistakes or acknowledge to a parent when they have made a mistake or something needs to be adjusted.

Terrence emphasized the importance of keeping the relationships positive, thinking about what took place, and then following it up by examining what could have been done more effectively from the teacher, parent, and student perspective. He said, "Communication needs to happen early and often." He believes that because teacher–parent partnerships reflect collaborative communication, acknowledging issues and letting parents and students know that teachers care can help build and sustain these partnerships.

Terrence's training for teacher–parent partnerships have been informal. While he could not recall any coursework he completed during his teacher education program, he did indicate receiving informal instruction about working with parents. "When I first got here, there was some informal instruction given but more of how to navigate certain issues and how to discuss an academic versus behavioral issue." Terrence said that the formal implementation of the 3-week email initiative at School A this past year has helped create accountability for teachers and assisted the development and sustainability of positive communication with parents (This initiative is discussed in more detail in the section on Theme 3). Consequently, Terrence believes that early and frequent communication with students and parents is now an expectation of his role as a teacher at School A.

Christian

Christian is a new teacher and is in his second year of teaching. With a bachelor's degree in history and political science, he has been a history educator at School A for two years, teaching junior- and senior-level history in addition to advanced placement history courses. Christian is also active as a junior varsity and varsity coach. He is excited about his chosen career as a teacher as he comes from a family of educators. As a new teacher, Christian spoke about the significance of his teaching career because he is preparing students in and outside the classroom for their next chapter in life.

Christian's initial reaction to describing teacher–parent partnerships was that he could not stand confrontation and that this was the first word he identified with these partnerships. Despite his reaction, he said, "Honestly, with my personal experience, almost every parent interaction I've had in the classroom has been solely positive." Christian feels that ensuring the expectations of the student in the classroom are communicated clearly and concisely with both students and parents is the main priority in teacher–parent partnerships. Then, when parent interaction becomes necessary, teacher–parent partnerships are positive experiences for teachers, parents, and students.

Christian continuously reiterated his role as a proactive communicator with parents. As he expects the students to take responsibility for their academic progress, Christian initiates organization, attention to detail, consistency, and communication in the classroom carries over into teacher–parent partnerships. Then, because structure and organization are provided to students and parents through clearly defined course expectations, it is easier to establish teacher–parent partnerships.

While Christian attributed his fears of teacher–parent partnerships to being a new teacher and lacking experience, he also discussed the importance of taking the initiative with parents. Although he had no formal training on teacher–parent partnerships in his undergraduate coursework, Christian believes the faculty and staff at School A have provided a tremendous amount of support in an informal manner regarding these partnerships and how to appropriately collaborate with parents in partnership. "But just saying parent–teacher communication will achieve success, that's not true. It has to be approached in a certain way." Christian said he appreciates the support and advice he has received on how to establish communication lines as early as possible and that when these lines are established early, trustworthy relationships follow.

Pablo

As a teacher for nine years, Pablo is the most veteran of the new teachers interviewed for this study. He teaches history for grades 9–12 and has also taught psychology, sociology, and advanced placement history courses. Having some administrative experience, Pablo frequently spoke about the importance of teachers facilitating teacher–parent partnerships by initiating proactive, positive working relationships with students.

Pablo used an analogy of a three-legged stool to describe teacher–parent partnerships, explaining that teachers, students, and parents need to come together for a common goal and that he views parents as an integral leg of the stool. Like these stool legs, interactions between students and parents must be balanced and reflect a proactive approach to helping students. "Basically, all three of those people need to come to the table, including parents, and teachers, and the student. Otherwise, the educational process suffers. So, I think of parents as a very important part of the educational process." Pablo also spoke about the importance of setting clear expectations and structures in the classroom and having continuous, positive, and proactive

conversations with students before their grades suffer. As Pablo put it, "The emphasis shouldn't be on failure." Pablo demonstrated a strong sense of conviction by detailing the importance of establishing trust and buy-in with parents. He stated that telling students and parents he cares and wants to do everything in his power to help students can play a significant role in developing ongoing relationships with parents. He also stressed the importance of not being reactive to situations with students, but instead being progressive in seeking feasible and appropriate solutions to help students.

When describing the competencies or skills needed for effective teacher–parent partnerships, Pablo identified transparency, support of the student, and consistency with the message as being the most significant components. Pablo mentioned a stereotypical belief among some teachers that all interaction with parents is negative and said it is the teacher's responsibility to initiate proactive instead of reactive relationships with parents. Pablo believes teachers may have a sense of stage fright or fear of dealing with parents because of not knowing what to expect regarding the outcome of a situation. While Pablo indicated that he had experienced apprehension about teacher–parent partnerships as a new teacher, he cited experience as helping him eliminate his concern.

> That stage fright, professional stage fright, for lack of a better word, has kind of gone away. I've had enough neutral or successful conversations with parents that I'm not really afraid. It used to be something that even it if was positive, I'd be apprehensive about calling not because I didn't think they were going to be supportive but because of the unknown nature of that outcome.

Pablo believes that transparency with students and parents, proactive and supportive

communication, and consistency about working toward goals have helped him create and

maintain positive, proactive, and collaborative working relationships with students and parents.

Pablo identified a master's-level education program where teacher–parent partnerships

were discussed through role-playing, hypothetical scenarios, and advice from classroom experts

on how to approach relationships with students and parents. Although he identified School A as

having a lack of formal preparation for teachers in partnerships with parents, Pablo said he

receives a significant amount of "tribal support"—informal communication and support from

colleagues, supervisors, and other school administrators. He believes that since this support is

readily available, formal support may not be necessary because teachers can ask colleagues,

guidance office staff, and administrators for assistance. "The small community allows for the

facilitation of relationships to provide one-on-one help and assistance with teacher–parent

partnerships." Through the informal assistance provided, Pablo stated that early and positive

reinforcement with students and follow-up and consistency with parents provides a well-

balanced three-legged stool in teacher–parent partnerships.

Beverly

Having been immersed in diverse teaching experiences throughout her career as an

educator, Beverly has taught in public schools, technical schools, junior colleges, and at the

college level. She has taught English for grades 9–12 and honors-level English courses. Beverly

has also served as a teacher advisor for some student organizations. When providing her thoughts

about teacher–parent partnerships, Beverly stressed that they must be 50–50 deals that teachers

must give 50% of the effort and parents must contribute 50% of the effort for these partnerships

to be effective.

Beverly described teacher–parent partnerships emerging when a parent or teacher reaches out to the other party because a student is struggling academically. She spoke about great strides being made in teacher–parent partnerships when the parents attend a meeting and have honest intentions of supporting the student and the teacher. When identifying teacher–parent partnerships, Beverly referenced differences in working with parents in previous generations compared to today's parents and said she has seen changes in the perceptions of teachers' roles. These differences have shifted how teacher–parent partnerships operate. In the past, students were always involved in these partnerships, but today, parents will not bring their children to meetings with teachers.

> In the past, way past, teacher–parent conferences were wonderful . . . The students were usually present . . . There was no animosity, there was no hostility, there was no aggressiveness or attacking. Today, however, with my experience, parents want to attack and blame the teacher, and the student has no accountability. It boils down to 'Okay, what are you, the teacher, going to do to make my child successful?'

Beverly said that a true teacher–parent partnership exists when the parent, teacher, and student work together. If one of these individuals is left out of the collaborative effort, a teacher will not be able to experience success in a teacher–parent partnership.

When Beverly spoke about the competencies or skills needed for effective teacher–parent partnerships, she expressed that teachers need patience and communication skills in the context of respectful and honest environments. Patience is required to explain what goes on in a classroom step by step because "parents don't truly understand." She also identified constant communication as very important since teachers and parents have limited time to sit down for face-to-face meetings. "I send a great deal of emails to parents asking for support, demanding an

answer, so they have to respond, and it seems to work." Beverly believes that patient and constant communication with parents in a respectful and honest environment helps parents understand what they can do to work with teachers to help students achieve success.

Beverly has no formal training on how to work with parents in teacher–parent partnerships and feels this is an area needing exploration. She said, "I think there should be classes, sessions, [and] workshops to help them [parents] because I don't think parents truly understand what a real parent conference should be." While she continuously receives support from the principal and guidance department staff at School A, Beverly believes more formal instruction should be provided about facilitating teacher–parent meetings and teaching parents about respecting common goals.

Dorothy

Dorothy, a veteran teacher, has taught in the parochial school system for her entire career. She has been a high school science teacher for 30 years and has taught at School A for the past 25 years. Dorothy teaches various levels in the science department, including advanced placement and honors courses, and has been an advisor for student organizations. Based on her many years of experience, Dorothy believes teacher–parent partnerships help and motivate students to reach their goals.

Dorothy believes that communications between teachers and parents must be transparent and that without communication, teachers and students cannot move forward with student goals. If expectations are understood, students will be better able to work toward their personal academic goals. "Communication with parents [and] understanding of expectations are integral to students performing and meeting their goals and having their needs met." She further explained teacher–parent partnerships are successful because of the communication piece

through her example of the 3-week emails teachers are required to distribute to parents of students who are academically struggling with a grade of a D or lower. She also emphasized the importance of communication being a mutual commitment between all parties. "I think that all those on board, all those participating, whether it be the counselor, the teacher, the parent, [or] the student, there needs to be mutual communication."

Dorothy spoke about the importance of parents taking responsibility and playing a part in knowing what their children are doing academically. Yet, too much oversight on the parents' side might create difficulty in a partnership. She emphasized that parents need to how to balance between challenging and supporting their children and that an appropriate amount of parental support and mutual communication between teachers, parents, and students helps to create significant value in teacher–parent partnerships.

As communication is the key to teacher–parent partnerships, Dorothy believes teachers need patience with parents and students. She said teachers must also be thorough and gave examples of having accurate recordkeeping skills and following up with students and parents in a timely fashion. Dorothy also said that while it can be challenging to develop and sustain teacher–parent partnerships because of time constraints, if teachers are organized and thorough, they will be able to identify problems in advance of issues.

Dorothy has no formal training in teacher–parent partnerships. She indicated that workshops for teachers and parents would be helpful for both parties to learn how to work together. Even though there are more ways to communicate thanks to modern technology, it can also be more difficult. Dorothy explained that progressing through the digital world requires management, mutual understanding, structure, and additional training in the classroom setting.

She feels such training would add significant value to the relationship dynamics in partnerships between teachers and parents.

Becky

Becky is a veteran teacher who has been at School A for 14 years. She has taught high school and college-level courses for 18 years and has taught regular, honors, and advanced placement English courses. She emphasized the importance of setting a positive tone with parents. The parents can be one of a teacher's most prominent advocates in helping students.

Becky identified teacher–parent partnerships as an area where she has experienced significant professional growth over time. She acknowledged that as a young teacher, she was afraid to contact parents because she thought they would think she was a young new teacher who did not know what she was doing. She now describes teacher–parent partnerships as opportunities for teachers to reach out and open the lines of communication with parents in a mutual relationship. "It's a real partnership when you can reach out to a parent with concerns, and they can express concerns to you. A parent and teacher will follow up with one another and back each other up."

Becky believes positive tone control is essential in getting teacher–parent relationships started in the right direction. "If you get to be the one who starts the conversation and sets up the tone, I think it can change everything." She feels that while the teacher–parent partnerships are excellent tools, they also require teachers to set aside time and practice effective communication.

Becky described some key competencies or skills necessary for teacher–parent partnerships, including the need for establishing clear parameters with students in the classroom, tone control, and consistency with student and parent follow-up. Noting that technology has drastically changed the way teachers and parents communicate, Becky believes that how

messages are communicated is essential to developing and sustaining teacher–parent partnerships. As an example, the tone in the 3-week email communications to parents of students who are academically struggling can make or break a teacher–parent partnership.

Although Becky has no formal training in teacher–parent partnerships, she believes she learned about them simply through using common sense and her experiences over the course of time. She said, "This [teacher–parent partnership] is just something I sort of had to learn. You know, trial by fire, like all teachers when you first start. Just throw you in the deep end." The most formal training she received was at the start of the current academic year with the implementation of the 3-week email program, about which she said,

> Honestly, that's like the only direct instruction I've ever gotten ever, now that I think
>
> about it, on how to communicate with parents. But I mean at any school, even in my
>
> instruction to become a teacher, nobody talked about how you talk to parents.

Becky said that even though she is a veteran teacher, the 3-week progress check email School A instituted has made a vast difference in her partnerships with parents because of the constant communication and follow-up provided through this initiative.

Christine

In her seventh year as a high school history teacher, Christine is a second-year teacher at School A. She previously taught at a public high school. Christine has also taught honors and advanced placement history and is an athletic coach. She stressed the importance of initiating partnerships to help bridge the gap between school and home.

When discussing teacher–parent partnerships, Christine identified the need to initiate contact and conversation with parents at the beginning of the school year. The essence of initiating contact and reaching out to parents communicates the need and significance of

collaboration and helps to bring the parents and school together for the student's benefit. For example, Christine stated,

> The biggest thing I think in the context of School A is being continually told and reminded that we're here to help them understand what's going on in our classroom and subsequently help them understand why their student may be struggling, or maybe their student may be doing something really well that we need to highlight.

Christine feels that effective teacher–parent partnerships at School A center on positive and meaningful relationships to help students succeed and said,

> I think that the teacher–parent relationship is extremely effective in assisting not only me as a teacher to teach the student but having the student be successful in the long run because they know that not only are there teachers involved in their education, but their parents as well.

Through effective teacher–parent partnerships, Christine believes students can learn appropriate self-advocacy skills when they see teachers and parents are invested in their education and their overall well-being.

Christine believes teachers need to be willing to step out of their comfort zones to initiate and engage in parent communication. "I think one of the big things is just being willing to call the parent, get in touch with that parent, and not be afraid of them." She feels teachers need to be adaptable and flexible in teacher–parent partnerships as each student has different learning needs. Therefore, when teachers are willing to initiate parent contact in the partnership, it communicates that the teacher cares for the student's success. As a result, teachers and parents develop mutual trust and respect in the effort that each is putting forth to help students achieve their academic goals.

Christine is in her seventh year as an educator and has yet to have any formal training in teacher–parent partnerships. She cited a lack of training due to the nature of teacher–parent partnerships continuously changing. "But teacher preparation programs—they don't prepare you, because I think as time goes on, the parent [and] teacher are different." However, Christine believes role-playing and asking other teachers for advice can be instrumental in establishing and maintaining effective teacher–parent partnerships. Yet, teachers must be willing and open to ask for help and be prepared to step out of their comfort zones to learn the skills necessary for partnerships. Christine also emphasized the importance of using school guidance department and administration resources at School A if teachers need assistance partnering with parents and to bridge gaps between students' home and school experiences.

Discussion of Findings

In their interviews, all of the study participants identified the impact of teacher–parent partnerships for the betterment of students and the skills needed for these partnerships at School A. In the data analysis process, I wanted to ensure that I represented the essence of what teachers at School A recounted in their interviews. During data analysis, which included theme, in vivo, and process coding, I identified key themes from the participants' discussions of their lived experiences of teacher–parent partnerships at School A. The themes aligned with the three research questions that guided this study. The main contexts of the themes are explained in accordance with the research questions in the following discussion of findings. The analysis of each theme is explained in the text. The tables for each theme contain narrative statements referencing the perceptions of the new and veteran teachers' lived experiences of the theme.

Theme 1: Shared Goals and Teacher-Initiated Relationships

Analysis of the interviews with five new and five veteran teachers at School A indicated that teacher–parent partnerships should focus on teacher-initiated relationships and shared goals. While being inclusive of parents and students, these partnerships should be initiated and facilitated by the teachers, and the students in question should be included. The participants emphasized the importance of students being at the center of teacher–parent partnerships. Furthermore, they indicated that the goals established for student success are more beneficial to students and meaningful to the teacher–parent partnerships when the students are included. Table 2 shows the significant statements each participant made about the importance of teacher-initiated partnerships and shared goals.

Table 2

Significant Statements for Theme 1: Shared Goals and Teacher-Initiated Relationships

Statement	Teacher and status
That's the goal of teaching and facilitating true learning—helping students have an enriching learning experience. I think it's fundamental to have a functional teacher–parent partnership	Martha—new
That you have to work together to help, especially, some of these students get through the high school years.	Brian—veteran
And we start from there and talk about the individual child, because they are all different and different students need different things.	
I think it's important for parents to understand these aren't little kids anymore, that they're evolving and that they're part of the conversation. You cannot create adversarial relationships with parents and expect anything positive to come from it.	Bruce—veteran
Because I think that's . . . that's really how I see education is. It's not just students, not just teacher but there's both parties. So, I think that's like a big part of my philosophical beliefs.	Terrence—new
I think in many cases teachers need to be the initiator.	Christian—new

Statement	Teacher and status
Basically, all three of those people need to come to the table, including parents and teachers and the student. Otherwise, the educational process suffers. So, I think of parents as a very necessary part of the educational process.	Pablo—new
I think that when you're transparent about your goals, your attitudes, your expected learning outcomes, your process it's just like anything else. Students and parents should know the expectations.	
When I first hear it, what I think about it is, it should be a 50–50 deal. Parents should have certainly 50% of involvement. Teachers should have 50% involvement, and it should be a mutual understanding and agreement.	Beverly—veteran
Teacher–parent partnerships are an extremely necessary component to successful student progress.	Dorothy—veteran
I think it's helpful not to go in believing that parents are the enemy. We have a shared purpose. We all have the same goal.	Becky—veteran
I think that the teacher–parent relationship is extremely effective in assisting not only me as a teacher to teach the student but having the student be successful in the long run.	Christine—new

Teacher-Initiated Relationships. As noted, the study participants perceive that they need to initiate teacher–parent partnerships at School A. As the data indicated, identifying and communicating structured and clearly defined course and classroom expectations is one of the skills teachers must put into practice. New and veteran teachers both expressed how clearly defined expectations for students can set the tone for effective teacher–parent partnerships where teachers, parents, and students collaboratively work to establish goals geared toward student success.

Outlining the structure of the classroom expectations is important. Communication when a student is struggling is also an essential foundation to the partnership. Teachers must initiate and reach out to parents of students who need additional academic reinforcement. The teachers initiating the communication is what fosters the formation and evolution of teacher–parent partnerships. Communication in the partnerships then focuses on the students' needs and the shared goals in the partnership.

Focus on Shared Goals. All of the teachers interviewed for this study emphasized the importance of focusing on shared goals between the teachers, parents, and students as essential to bridging the gap between parents and the school through relationships centered on mutual trust, maintaining positive relationships, and making student success the goal. For example, one teacher explained the essence of teacher–parent partnerships using a three-legged stool approach. While teachers, parents, and students represent each leg of the stool, the seat of the stool represents the goal of the teacher–parent partnerships, which is student success. The stool legs join together to provide support for the common goal. Except for one participant, all of the teachers emphasized the importance of being proactive rather than reactive in teacher–parent partnerships. Engaging with parents and students before issues arise and reaching out early and often results in a positive relationship centered on student improvement.

Theme 2: Proactive Communication, Collaboration, Organization and Structure

As demonstrated in Theme 1, while the study participants believe in reaching out early an often, these communications need to be proactive and stress collaboration for effective teacher–parent partnerships. The participants emphasized proactive communication and collaboration as critical competencies or skills necessary in the development, structure, and relationship of effective teacher–parent partnerships. These collaborative efforts require skill sets related to classroom and course content organization and structure.

Proactive Communication and Collaboration. Most of the study participants discussed elements of proactive communication and collaboration. The sandwich method analogy was communicated in various ways when I asked about the skills needed for effective teacher–parent partnerships. This method calls for the teacher to first address the student's talents and gifts. Then, using a positive tone and conveying a message of setting a future goal, the teacher

addresses the concern about the student's academic performance. After the teacher has expressed concerns about the student's academic growth, the teacher then follows up with another compliment reinforcing the skills the student has that can help to address the issue. As a result, the problem is sandwiched between two compliments. The teachers who described using this method of proactive communication said that it sends a verbal and nonverbal message to the parents that the teachers are genuinely interested in working collaboratively with parents to help students meet or exceed their academic goals. Thus, proactive communication and collaboration provides opportunities for teachers, parents, and students to work together for student success.

Organization and Structure. The art of organization and structure was mentioned by all study participants as a significant skill teachers must have when working with parents in teacher–parent partnerships. They stressed the importance of organization in classroom structure and course content as a foundation of teacher–parent partnerships. Initiated by teachers, classroom organization helps lay the foundation of partnerships by communicating expectations to the students. Also important is consistency in course organization and structure as this helps to reassure parents that the teachers are success oriented in their instruction.

The participants also said that proactive communication, collaboration, organization, and structure go together. When organization and structure in classroom management and course expectations are clearly communicated, parents are more likely to understand what is expected of their children. Consequently, when classroom expectations are communicated clearly, the teachers can more easily promote proactive communication and collaboration in teacher–parent partnerships. Table 3 shows the significant statements the participants made about proactive communication, collaboration, organization, and structure.

Table 3

Significant Statements for Theme 2: Proactive Communication and Collaboration, Organization and Structure

Statement	Teacher and status
And then I think that the teacher also has to have certain ways or skills at writing or speaking to parents that—there's a typical method like the sandwich method where you front load with some positive, you layer in the issue that needs to be addressed, and then you close with a positive.	Martha—new
So even before there would be a direct communication with one parent and one teacher, that teacher needs to have either written in their syllabus or somewhere posted, clear expectations of what happens in the classroom, what they expect students to do in the classroom and learn, and how the learning process happens.	
[Referencing sandwich method] And that is a skill that I think is necessary for teachers to be able to help parents understand that they're not picking on the student, that there are things that the student is doing that's great to help keep the parent in an open, positive mind frame.	
So, there's that open communication, the ability for open communication basically 24/7. In some ways it's a good thing, in other ways, it's a bad thing. I try not to let it be negative. I oftentimes wait until the next day to reply to give myself time to think about what I want to write.	Brian—veteran
I would assume if you're sending a child to our school, you're involved. You can easily find their grades, their progress, what they've turned in, what they haven't turned in, everything is online. So there's no reason for parents not to be up to speed with where their children are and what their children are doing in school.	
Part of that is to reassure parents that as the teacher of the course, I have an idea of the entire semester, I know what's coming up, I know what—I know the likely pitfalls for students and can reassure parents that I know that they're at this level right now. But coming up in the next month or so there's a good chance for them to improve because there's another topic right down the road that your child should be okay with so long as they put the effort.	
And so people want immediate communication, they want immediate results, but without––you've got to be in touch with people. I think you can't put anything off.	Bruce—veteran
People, I think teachers, they get worn out and they want to avoid communicating. You can't avoid it. That would be my advice to any teacher would be, get over that. You're going to be talking to these people, you might as well do it in a positive, proactive way.	
I always try to remind the parents about like this is a collaboration. It's not me telling the parent, hey your kid needs to do this. It's more of okay, what can we do to fix these problems?	Terrence—new
When I first showed up here, it was just like, yeah, that's kind of what you do right you communicate with the parent, it's you call home when this happens, you do this. And it seemed like it was just kind of like part of the natural part of the structure of being a teacher here.	
Making expectations up front very clear in terms of both classroom performance, expectations, behavior. So that way, when problems do arise—if you're having that meeting with a parent, if you're having that interaction, you go back to those expectations that both parties have agreed to from day one. It makes things much, much easier. That's a lesson I learned very early.	Christian—new

Statement	Teacher and status
I'll reach out to parents in terms of when students are truly kind of blowing me away in terms of classroom performance and class discussion. I'm very quick to email a parent with regards to that. And obviously, the interaction there is only going to be positive. But once again, that creates an open door that not necessarily something bad would happen with that student moving forward, but it creates a kind of reputation that, "Hey. You're an open teacher."	
So, organization, being thorough, being consistent with your student is only going to make it easier when dealing with parents.	
Don't wait until a kid's in a position to fail. You need to act. You need to be proactive with communication, and especially in a positive sense because it can have a profound impact on how parents perceive that relationship.	Pablo—new
But the one thing I do at the start of every meeting with the parent is I set expectations for it if I feel that it needs to happen. I'll say, hey, here's what we're here to discuss. Here's going to be the nature of this conversation. It's success oriented, it's solutions oriented, and it's positive. And again, that's not something I did when I first started meeting with teacher or parents and it positively changed the dynamic of those interactions.	
The return value on teacher–parent partnerships could be 100% if the student is actually involved, the teacher is actually involved, and they can collaborate and come up with a plan.	Beverly—veteran
Patience. Sometimes, parents don't truly understand what goes on in a classroom and so the teacher has to explain it in such a way as to not be attacking or making fun of or whatever, to the student. It has to be nonthreatening. It has to be factual. It can't be, well, sometimes—it has to be a factual statement as to what's going on and once the teacher advises parents of that, whatever that is, the problem, the situation, then I think they can work together.	
Communication with parents, understanding of expectations are integral to students performing and meeting their—me meeting their needs and having their goals met. Well, I think there's a high degree of communication.	Dorothy—veteran
Teachers need to have organization and structure so students and parents know what to expect.	
I think that if you, again, start the line of communication, talk about the things that you want them to learn, and why, and that you want them to be successful, and yeah, also get a good grade, then you can sort of establish that you guys all do actually want the same things.	Becky—veteran
But another part of it is I think, similarly, it's sort of tone control. It's not blame, it's not "This child is terrible." It's "This is where there are problems. Here are the ways that we can solve it. I really want them to be successful. I know this is going to be okay. Here are the ways that I'm available." Just keeping it positive and also just keeping the tone of the overarching message like, "I care, I want them to be successful, I want them to get this material. I think it's important." That's the piece that I think changes the tone of the conversation.	

Statement	Teacher and status
So part of it is just organization and setting aside time to actually be in communication. This helped this year because we've been forced to do it, 3-week emails.	
So organization, being thorough, being consistent with your student is only going to make it easier when dealing parents.	
The first thought that comes to my head is just having an open line of communication between the teacher and the parent or parents or custodial parents of the students that are in your classroom. One of the big things that you do as a teacher is you're consistently trying to bridge that gap between what's going on in the school and what's going on at home to better understand your students.	Christine—new
The biggest thing I think is that we're here to bridge that gap between the parents and the school. We want to help them understand what's going on in our classroom and subsequently help them understand why their student may be struggling.	
But, it's really making sure that the teacher and the parent or parents are on the same page on every aspect of what's going on in the classroom.	

Theme 3: Informal and Formal Training for Teacher-Parent Partnerships

All study participants spoke to how teacher–parent partnerships could be enhanced with formal training opportunities. Except for one new teacher, Pablo, all participants had no formal training in these partnerships. Pablo's formal training in these partnerships was during his master's-level education; he has had no further formal training since this course. The other participants said they learned about teacher–parent partnerships over time and cited informal training through the help of other teachers they know and trust. Time and experience helped the new and veteran teachers become more knowledgeable about how to engage in partnerships with parents. The new teachers also emphasized the importance of asking questions and seeking help and support from other teachers and school administrators.

While School A does not provide formal training on teacher–parent partnerships, all of the study participants said they received informal training through the support of administration, the school guidance department, and their colleagues. For example, eight participants described the impact of a new school initiative to increase communication between teachers and parents,

which began midyear. Every three weeks, teachers reach out to parents whose students have a grade of a D or lower. Informal training on the initiative was provided at a weekly teacher meeting in a discussion about the email initiative. Study participants noted that School A's guidance department staff and school administrators have supported them in this new initiative.

During their interviews, the teachers emphasized that informal support from administration, the school guidance department, and their colleagues aids the development and productivity of their teacher–parent partnerships. The participants feel they are supported by other teachers and are comfortable seeking help for teacher–parent partnerships when needed. However, they also expressed the need for formal training in developing and sustaining effective teacher–parent partnerships. Table 4 shows the significant statements from new and veteran teachers about the informal support and formal training needed for effective teacher–parent partnerships at School A.

Table 4

Significant Statements for Theme 3: Informal and Formal Training for Teacher-Parent Partnerships

Statement	Teacher and status
I'm trying to think if we had specific trainings. I don't think we had any actual specific trainings on responding to parents.	Martha—new
I do remember in our new teacher orientation, that getting casually mentioned to the—and the expectation of responding to parents within 24 hours, and trying to frontload with some positive comments first, and having to and it was mentioned to try to take a step back and not respond when you're in the heat of the moment. So that was mentioned in the new teacher [orientation].	
So as far as training goes, it's constantly different. I can only think of one in-service over the last 30 years that said much about communicating with parents. And I don't remember if it was a video or if the person was actually there and there's probably Charlie Wong and his whole—But specific training on how to deal with parents, I don't recall any in-services that I've done that have been specific to that.	Brian—veteran
I don't know of the trainings there. I don't remember conflict resolution with parent training.	Bruce—veteran

Statement	Teacher and status
So when I first got here, it was less formal. There was some formal instruction that was given, but it was more of how to navigate certain issues, how to discuss an academic issue versus behavioral issues. So it's a little bit less formal, I think, on the onset. There was some formal instruction.	Terrance—new
But I noticed that kind of—I mentioned this a little bit earlier, the expectation is you're going to communicate with parents. So that was sort of baked into the kind of teaching experience that [inaudible]. It was the expectation. It wasn't some special circumstances. It was like, "Okay, you're going to do this. It's going to take place."	
Can I say none? Now obviously I come from a family of teachers, so nothing specific, but anecdotal stories of how these things should be dealt with has always been kind of taught to me. But nothing concrete until maybe this past year or so with the course that I'm currently taking. And even then there's not much out of all the coursework.	Christian—new
But in all of that, I have had not had one lesson on parent–teacher [partnerships].	
A lot of hidden curriculum, a lot of tribal knowledge, my master's program was huge, a lot of role-playing, a lot of hypotheticals, a lot of very experienced minds giving you advice on how to approach and frame things. And then the learned success of being an admin, of having positive experiences with parents and having neutral experiences with parents.	Pablo—new
Probably little to none. I think that's an area that certainly should be explored, and teachers and parents and students should be required to have input. And then I think there should be classes, sessions, workshops to help them because I don't think parents truly understand what a real parent conference should be.	Beverly—veteran
I mean, I don't really think that's an area that I've probably gotten much help with at all. Only when there is a really nasty, ugly conference, then [the] administrator will sit in, or if you ask for another set of ears. But again, I think because I've been able to get in front of a lot of problems, my bad, or—I don't know—maybe some people can be naturals at it.	Dorothy—veteran
A ton, informal actually. This is something that I sort of had to learn. You know, trial by fire, like all teachers when you first start. Just throw you in the deep end. See if you can swim.	Becky—veteran
But, I mean at any school, even in my instruction to become a teacher, nobody talked about how you talk to parents.	
My teacher training, there was no course work, no teacher, no nothing.	
I have received zero preparation. I learned, probably within the first 3 days of my life as a teacher, that they do not prepare you for being a teacher. And you kind of just—for a lack of better ways, you have to roll with the punches, and I think that one of the biggest pieces that helped me be successful was that there were people in my corner who knew that I was a brand new spanking teacher out of the teacher program, and were very, very, very blunt with telling me, "When you're going to call a parent, you need to have one of us in there.	Christine—new

Theme 4: Values, Academic Growth, and College Preparation

The study participants believe that teacher–parent partnerships are vital to developing values, academic growth, college preparation, and achieving student goals. Although all but two teachers practice the Catholic faith, they all said that teaching is not just a job but instead a vocation reflecting the faith and values-based identity embedded in School A's culture. In this college preparatory religiously affiliated high school, students learn and experience each of these components through effective teacher–parent partnerships.

As a result of School A being a small community, the study participants described their experiences in teacher–parent partnerships as centered around a vital and significant purpose, developing the whole student in body, mind, and spirit. The nature of the small community allows teachers to be more flexible and adaptable when working with parents in partnerships and addressing student needs. Values play an integral role in teacher–parent partnerships as teachers and parents collaboratively engage students in college preparatory academics and pursuing their goals. The teachers stressed that they care about what happens to students in and outside of the classroom.

Whether through teaching, coaching, advising a club, or participating in a community service-oriented activity with students, the study participants noted the importance of getting to know their students beyond the academic realm. These efforts result in parents seeing teachers express genuine care for their children through verbal and nonverbal communications. Consequently, parents are more willing to engage in teacher–parent partnerships because they see the significant impact they have on their children's academic success and how it promotes and encourages students to achieve their goals. Table 5 shows the participants' significant

statements emphasizing the importance of using teacher–parent partnerships to educate students

in body, mind, and spirit and for success in accomplishing their goals.

Table 5

Significant Statements for Theme 4: Values, Academic Growth, and College Preparation

Statement	Teacher and status
I would hope that the parents would be understanding of the fact that I have a common goal with them, that I want their kid to be successful.	Martha—new
That really frames the relationship. That you guys are on the same team, and that it is a partnership for the goal of the student being successful. I think that I've learned that when the partnerships are framed that way, they can be extremely effective in guiding students to make better decisions. Whether it's better decisions on behavior or better decisions on their academic commitments, then they will result in an overall better learning experience for the student.	
I care about what happens to students inside and outside of the classroom.	Brian—veteran
It's the student's success. If you're student-centered, right—that's another difficult thing. Are the people involved in this profession really, number one, stake is the children's growth? I think this is a vocation. It's not a job.	Bruce—veteran
Not so much part of your job or your bosses require you to do this, but it's, it almost benefits the teacher as much as anybody else to make those communications and, and be part of that relationship. That's a yeah, that's . . . that's teaching is making those connections.	Terrance—veteran
I was a Catholic school student and also now a Catholic school teacher. I think a big part of that from the parent's perspective in terms of return value, is hopefully, their student develops as a person too, that they start to gain a strong sense of right and wrong, and morality, and how to behave towards their peers and towards adults. I think it's a big part of the parent–teacher conversation. Like yeah, good grades are nice, but a big part of our component and [the subject school] is kind of like developing the whole person. So, I feel like that's really—when we talk about return value, that's like, I think the best thing that you see coming out of these conversations. Improved behavior, developing as a person, that kind of thing.	
For me, it's a relationship between the teacher and the student. But I want to treat it as much as a college atmosphere as possible to where it's one on one. They're responsible for their own actions.	Christian—new
I did not come from a home life where I felt valued at home, so I loved school. And I felt cared about at school. And I think that bias brings in with it—not an over-dedication because that sounds self-aggrandizing. But almost like I'm afraid to hang up the phone because I don't want—I don't want the parent to leave any interaction with me thinking that their kid isn't cared for and that their success isn't cared for.	Pablo—veteran
We forget that there's much more to it than a student and a "me." There are many more things involved. So I think we need to look at the whole picture. The student as a whole. Not just academically but the whole student to see what's going on.	Beverly—veteran
We do it [referencing teacher–parent partnerships] and it's really important because we care about our students being successful in the real world.	Dorothy—veteran

Statement	Teacher and status
I mean, these are their most precious people in the world and it takes a lot of trust to leave them in our care all day. So I think that it has to mean a lot, to have communication with teachers who you feel like really care like, they care about these humans that are so special to you.	Becky—veteran
And you can, again, set that tone, demonstrate that you care, and that you're concerned, and that you want them to be successful.	
And I've seen more kids here be excited that their teachers are involved in their lives. And sometimes, they need that.	Christine—new

Comparison of Teacher–Parent Partnership Perceptions

Although data analysis showed many similarities in teacher–parent partnership perceptions between new and veteran teachers, there were some striking differences in their perceptions of parental involvement in these partnerships. Analysis showed significant differences in how new and veteran teachers prefer to communicate in these partnerships. As an example, new teachers preferred initiating and facilitating more face-to-face dialogue and interaction while veteran teachers preferred email communication and providing parents explanations of how students could improve their academic progress. Even though all of the teachers communicate with parents through email, new teachers expressed the preference of calling parents to initiate partnerships. In contrast, the veteran teachers stated that due to time constraints, it is easier to send emails than speak to parents on the phone or engage in face-to face conversations with them.

Differences were also found in how new and veteran teachers approach communication in teacher–parent partnerships. The new teachers expressed some initial fear of having to initiate these partnerships because parents' willingness to contribute to and support their children's learning process is unknown. The veteran teachers believed that as a result of time constraints, teachers should use emails to communicate and initiate contact with parents and tell them

precisely what needs to be done in these emails. The veteran teachers did not express any fear of teacher–parent partnerships.

Another difference was found in how collaboration in teacher–parent partnership is interpreted. New teachers expressed a want and need for partnership in collaboration. They described collaboration as the opportunity to work with students and parents to identify the whole picture. Then, the new teacher initiates a plan of action that allows the students and parents to be a part of the plan. In comparison, veteran teachers preferred to identify the student's needs with the parents and then allow the parents to address the issue with their children, independently of the teacher. As a result, some veteran teachers believed that parents are then responsible for further follow-up and collaboration with their children. In other words, further steps are between the parents and student, not the teacher, parents, and student. Table 6 shows a comparison of new and veteran teachers' perceptions of the necessary elements for effective teacher-parent partnerships at School A.

Table 6

Significant Statements for Comparisons Between New and Veteran Teachers

Statement	Teacher and status
I also think that I do have a little bit of a fear that the parent is going to react negatively. Even if I am approaching it from a very positive, collaborative standpoint, I do have some anxiety about a parent taking it the wrong way. So, I think that I try really hard to see if I can quell the behavior before reaching out to the parent to a fault sometimes.	Martha—new
For me, personally, it basically starts with contact from the parents, if there's an issue. It's normally how it begins. Being able to communicate with the parents, which I'm going to start with simple emails.	Brian—veteran
Personally, I've never really forced that issue with trying to get parents involved. I figured the parents know what the progress is, of the student and they're comfortable with it.	
With emails, they pretty much have access to the teachers 24/7. You can send an email whenever you want to.	
I think a lot of people are afraid of the parents.	Bruce—veteran

Statement	Teacher and status
Because it's contentious, and most people are, I'm conflict averse. But people in the modern world are going to try to bully you to get what they want. And you have to take that whole subject and get it out of the way and build a relationship.	
So, that one's just kind of like, it's not easy because those are difficult conversations. But I know like, right I'm seeing it, this is a phone call. It's not like one of those gray areas where I'm like, oh, should I call them? The student seems a little unhappy. It's like, okay, I know I need to communicate and reach out.	Terrence—new
Yeah. It's tough. You want to give them a sense of what's going on, but you don't want to over bear them with a bunch of minutia.	
So, it's kind of like this game of coaxing them, where you're giving them information, but you're not trying to overbear them. And you just want to let them know that their involvement is valued. So, I don't have a ton of experience with that.	
Perhaps a little bit of anxiety [laughter], quite honestly. Those that know me, I can't stand confrontation whatsoever. I'm open to it, but obviously, maybe a few experiences here and there—not that I've had any bad ones, quite honestly. But the looming threat [laughter] of that—there's possibly some anxiety there. But obviously, it's a core part of the profession, and I completely embrace that. But it's not something about the profession that I'm necessarily excited about [laughter].	Christian—new
But honestly, with my personal experience, almost every parent interaction I've had in the classroom, has been solely positive. There's no really negative experiences, and obviously that has a lot to do with it being [the subject school].	
I think that the inclusive parent dynamic is beneficial for the success of the students. And I think the more we strengthen parent–student relations at [the subject school], the more success we're going to have.	
There's that kind of prototypical fear of parent interaction that all parent interaction is negative. I don't know where that—that's obviously part of the hidden curriculum of a teaching undergrad, but I don't know where—but I feel like that's a lot with our younger teachers. And I think that some of our—I think that the majority of our teachers are interested. And, myself included, could stand to instigate those interactions more.	Pablo—new
I think, obviously, every school is going to have individuals that are abrasive or struggle with the power dynamic.	
Today, however, many conferences do not have the students present, which is a mistake. Students should hear what parents and teachers are saying about him or her. And it has turned in to be, with my experience, that parents want to attack and blame the teacher. The student has no accountability. It boils down to "Okay, what are you, the teacher, going to do to make my child successful?"	Beverly—veteran
Constant communication. It doesn't have to be a face-to-face parent conference, but I send a great deal of emails to parents asking for support, demanding an answer, so they have to respond, and it seems to work.	
I know that sometimes calling a parent and bringing, let's say behavior to their attention, and they think that I'm talking about a different child. That's not how my child acts at home. So more or less that was useless because they don't see that. So, I try to have good recordkeeping skills so students aren't caught off guard.	Dorothy—veteran
So, part of it is just organization and setting aside the time to actually be in communication.	Becky—veteran

Statement	Teacher and status
You have to tell the parent about your concern and hope that they back you up.	
Part of it is I've gotten a lot older [laughter], sorry, but also I think that I've just learned over time how to focus on the positives, focus on the shared goal.	
And the teacher themselves really starting the conversation piece with the parent saying, this is what I see in class or, this is what's happening. Back to School Night and getting a face to the parent that you might be communicating with and then for me specifically, reaching out to the parent and the teacher themselves really starting the conversation piece with the parent saying, this is what I see in class or, this is what's happening. How can we work together to your student or students do better in the classroom?	Christine—new
I think one of the big things is just being willing to call the parent, get in touch with that parent, and not be afraid of them. And I think, also, one of the biggest things is having parents that are available that will answer your email or will answer your phone call, or if they can't answer, then they will email you back or they will call you back. I think those are the two biggest factors that make the partnership extremely effective. If the parent is unwilling to answer the phone call or you, as a teacher, are scared or unwilling to call that parent, then the parent–teacher relationship tends to go by the wayside and the student may also struggle in the classroom setting.	Christine—new

Summary

The purpose of this study was to identify secondary educators' perceptions of teacher–parent partnerships that best benefit students. This chapter was an in-depth account of the data gathered from semistructured interviews with teacher participants at School A. Five new and five veteran teachers were interviewed. After transcribing each interview, the data analysis process consisted of theme coding, in vivo coding, and process coding. Data coding helped to identify and understand the teachers' perceptions of teacher–parent partnerships at School A.

The themes that emerged provided a comprehensive understanding of teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of teacher–parent partnerships at School A. The emergent themes included a focus on shared goals, teacher-initiated relationships, proactive communication and collaboration, organization and structure in teacher–parent partnerships, the

need for formal teacher–parent partnership training, and developing students in body, mind, and spirit to support the achievement of students' goals.

New and veteran teacher participants at School A had many similar perceptions of teacher–parent partnerships. However, their comments also reflect the diversity of their lived experiences about what is most effective for teacher–parent partnerships at School A. In Chapter 5, I discuss how the study findings answer this study's research questions.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The teacher's role in teacher–parent partnerships can be an integral component of student's success in religiously affiliated college preparatory schools. For example, Xu and Gulosino (2006) found that the teacher's role in establishing partnership with parents could positively influence student performance. In the present transcendental phenomenological study, the purpose was to identify secondary educators' perceptions of teacher–parent partnerships that best benefit students in a religiously affiliated college preparatory school.

The research questions that guided this study focused on identifying the essence of lived experiences of faculty members and investigating their perceptions of parental involvement and the essential skills needed for effective teacher–parent partnerships. Analyzing the data from semistructured interviews with the study participants provided insights into these research questions. The research questions were:

RQ1: What are faculty perceptions of parental involvement in teacher–parent partnerships at parochial college preparatory schools?

RQ2: What are faculty perceptions of the competencies (skills) needed for effective teacher–parent partnerships at parochial college preparatory schools?

RQ3: What are the differences, if any, in new and veteran faculty perceptions of parental involvement in teacher–parent partnerships and the competencies (skills) needed for effective teacher–parent partnerships at parochial college preparatory schools?

In this chapter, I discuss the study findings as they relate to each research question. I also discuss study implications and recommendations for future research.

Discussion of the Findings

Findings from this study affirmed the significance of teacher–parent partnerships in the academic development of secondary-level students in a parochial college preparatory school environment. In discussing their perceptions of teacher–parent partnerships, the study participants cited the importance of first conveying information about content knowledge, classroom management, and classroom expectations to parents and students. These teachers believe that communicating student coursework organization and structural components provides a foundation for building effective teacher–parent partnerships consisting of appropriate challenges and support for students' academic growth. If these organizational and structural components do not exist, parents may lack trust in their children's classroom experiences. This lack of confidence may make parents less inclined to engage in partnerships with teachers.

The teacher participants from School A continually described teacher–partnerships in the context of the communication skills they use to initiate relationships with parents and students. Whether it was a one-time contact or multiple interactions with the same parent, the participants identified these experiences as teacher–parent partnerships. The teachers further explained the implications of these teacher-initiated dialogues between parents and students.

The study findings indicate that teacher–parent partnerships are an essential component of student academic success at School A. The findings also support previous research that demonstrated the importance of teacher–parent relationships in fostering academic growth in adolescent students (Brueck et al., 2012; Fantuzzo et al., 2004; Froiland & Davison, 2014). Consequently, teacher–parent partnerships are beneficial when teachers proactively communicate and collaborate with parents and students about shared goals for students' academic development.

Findings for Research Question 1

RQ1 asked about faculty perceptions of parental involvement in teacher–parent partnerships at School A. All of the participants stated that parental involvement is critical for effective teacher–parent partnerships. For example, as demonstrated by Hampden-Thompson and Galindo (2017), positive relationships between teachers and families are a predictor of academic achievement. The participants emphasized a need for shared goals between teachers and parents to establish effective teacher–parent partnerships. Also, new and veteran teachers alike provided a connecting piece that explained the importance of having parental involvement because it creates an understanding of shared goals for students' academic success. This connecting piece was demonstrated through participants explaining that structured and organized learning environments that include communication, classroom expectations, and assignments were critical components for setting the tone and foundation of teacher–parent partnerships. The teachers' perceptions were that creating these environments helped to establish parental trust in the classroom learning process, resulting in stronger parental involvement because the parents trusted the expectations teachers required of their children.

Furthermore, the participants perceived that teacher–parent partnerships need to be initiated by teachers. Taking the initiative emphasizes that the teachers are being proactive and communicates their commitment to students' academic success. However, some teachers acknowledged that teacher-initiated communication is often driven by needing to address a student's educational struggles in the classroom. Time constraints limit their ability to reach out and develop partnerships with parents whose children are academically thriving. However, the participants felt that it is equally important to recognize students who need additional academic reinforcement and those who exceed the benchmarks outlined in the curriculum.

Findings for Research Question 2

RQ2 asked about faculty perceptions of the competencies (skills) needed for effective teacher-parent partnerships at parochial college preparatory schools. The study participants identified proactive communication and collaboration as necessary competencies or skills required for effective teacher–parent partnerships at these schools. This finding is congruent with Westergård (2013), who stated that teacher–parent partnerships thrive when teachers have personal competencies including a positive attitude toward students and the ability to establish positive relationships with parents. The present study's participants identified proactive communication and collaboration as essential for effective relationships in teacher–parent partnerships. Nine of the participants identified the need for proactive communication and collaboration. The exception to this perception was a veteran teacher's belief that the teacher needs to communicate when there is an issue and that the parent should precisely follow what the teacher says. Her perspective is that it is not a collaborative effort in the sense of creating a plan of action together to help a student. Instead, she perceived that it is important to communicate with parents and clearly explain how they can help their children. The other teachers expressed the importance of collaboration in working with parents and students.

Collaboration was enforced through descriptions of and references to the three-legged stool, the sandwich method, and the 3-week email program initiative that School A implemented at the beginning of the 2019–2020 school year. Each relates to teacher–parent partnerships that directly involve students and require their participation in the learning process. All of the teachers interviewed said that students must be a part of the collaboration in effective teacher–parent partnerships. When proactive communication and collaboration exists between teachers, parents, and students, it results in effective teacher–parent partnerships.

The study participants agreed that a lack of formal training on how to create and interact with parents in partnership has caused teachers at School A to be skeptical and fearful of teacher–parent partnerships. One teacher had a master's-level course on classroom management that reviewed techniques for working with parents. The others have had no formal training in a teacher training program or through a professional development opportunity. As evidenced by the participants' comments, a lack of formal training in communicating and working with parents in partnership can cause apprehension about these actions. Vickers and Minke (1995) noted that new and veteran teachers both cited relationships with parents as one of the most challenging components of their careers. Therefore, teachers may hesitate to engage in teacher–parent partnerships because they have not been appropriately trained on how to communicate with parents.

The study participants also expressed being fearful of the unknown scenarios that may emerge when engaging with helicopter parents or parents who lack trust in the learning processes organized by the teachers. While the teachers acknowledged that the essential skills of proactive communication and collaboration are necessary for teacher–parent partnerships, they also recognize that they ensure their classrooms have an immense amount of organization and structure as a way to avoid interactions with helicopter parents or parents who are overbearing in their children's learning processes. When everything is heavily detailed and explained for students and parents, the teachers' perception is that there is no need for proactive communication and collaboration. Instead, information is communicated through the organization and structure of the classroom learning experience.

Findings for Research Question 3

RQ3 asked what differences, if any, exist between new and veteran faculty perceptions of parental involvement in teacher–parent partnerships and the competencies or skills needed for effective teacher–parent partnerships at parochial college preparatory schools. Responses from the study participants indicated some differences in perceptions between new and veteran faculty members. While they all emphasized the importance of focusing on students' academic success, they also believed that developing the whole student was as significant in preparing for the academic rigor of college.

The new teachers expressed an approach to teacher–parent partnerships different from that expressed by veteran teachers. They perceived that teacher–parent partnerships should be initiated by proactive outreach to parents. They expressed the importance of the teachers taking ownership and responsibility for initiating and fostering teacher–parent partnerships. They stated that these partnerships should be communicative and collaborative dialogues that include teachers, parents, and students in order to create the best plans of action that are specifically tailored to meet students' needs and individual academic growth and development goals.

In contrast, the veteran teachers perceived that after teachers initiate communication with parents and students, it then becomes the parents' responsibility to continue the conversation with their children and follow-up as necessary. They stressed that implementing action plans to ensure that students are working toward their personal educational goals is the parents' responsibility. The veteran teachers stressed the importance of creating solutions for parents and students rather than continuing a collaborative action plan between teachers, parents, and students.

To summarize, new and veteran teachers disagreed on who is responsible for facilitating teacher–parent partnerships. As Peterson et al. (2011) stated, lack of unity and clarity about teacher, parent, and student responsibilities in teacher–parent partnerships can create communication breakdowns, and these breakdowns can disrupt students' academic progress. The differences in perspectives on responsibilities in teacher–parent partnerships between teachers at School A suggest that these responsibilities need to be well defined and communicated.

Implications

The study findings indicate that teachers at School A perceive teacher–parent partnerships as an essential component in the academic development of students heading to college. According to Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory (BST), structured and reciprocal relationships between teachers, parents, and students directly and indirectly influence student academic growth and development (Tudge et al., 2009). As identified by the participants in this study, these interactive and reciprocal relationships within students' concentric systems provide the structural components of a network and a balance of challenge and support to the student. However, the teachers perceived that in School A's religiously affiliated college preparatory environment, educators must lead this collaborative partnership to help prepare students for the academic rigor of college.

The teachers in this study defined and explained teacher–parent partnerships in the context of communication. The content knowledge and classroom management practices communicated to students and parents translate to building trustworthy relationships. Furthermore, these practices also suggest the importance of proactive communication and collaboration in teacher–parent partnerships. Yet, a discrepancy exists between new and veteran teachers' perceptions on communication and their roles in teacher–parent partnerships. New

teachers perceived the need to initiate and facilitate teacher–parent partnerships. In contrast, while veteran teachers also perceived the need to initiate teacher–parent partnerships, they believed continued interaction and communication in the partnership should evolve from parents and students. However, as demonstrated through Bronfenbrenner's BST, teacher leadership is necessary for helping facilitate the interaction of students' concentric systems.

Another discrepancy exists in the interpretation and understanding of the essence of teacher–parent partnerships. In this study, teacher participants consistently identified teacher–parent partnerships as relationships requiring communication and collaboration. However, as Turnbull et al. (2006, p. 110) noted, teacher–parent partnerships involve a trusting and interactive relationships in which they "mutually agree to defer to each other's judgements and expertise." While the teachers discussed the importance of a collaborative and communicative relationship that creates trust, they believed the partnership should be facilitated and led by the educator. They did not indicate a mutual responsibility between teachers and parents. Instead, they highlighted the need to facilitate and take the lead in these relationships rather than their being a mutual and interactive exchange of information with parents. This is contrary to the definition of a teacher–parent partnership, which emphasizes a mutual agreement and understanding between teachers and parents in partnership. Consequently, teachers need an understanding of the mutual responsibilities between teachers and parents in these partnerships.

Also, the study results demonstrated the need for teachers to know and understand their roles in the context of teacher–parent partnerships. Often, teachers fear engaging in these partnerships because they do not understand their role (Warren et al., 2003). Additionally, teachers lack training on how to develop and facilitate collaborative and communicate partnerships with parents. As demonstrated by Epstein and Dauber (1991), parochial teachers'

perceptions of working with parents in teacher–parent partnerships can significantly impact student academic development. Therefore, with additional training, teachers may be less fearful of engaging in partnerships with parents and more confident in facilitating them.

Another implication suggested by the study findings is the connection between teachers, parents, and students. In this religiously affiliated college preparatory school, teachers and parents in the school community working collaboratively to engage and encourage students in their academic growth promotes a sense of belonging among the students. This reflects Bronfenbrenner's BST as these students grow in systems of influence interacting with one another. Rouse and Ware (2017) explained that when teacher–parent partnerships focus on the integration of a sense of community and belonging, this results in a relationship between teachers and parents that focuses on student academic development. Consequently, when teachers take the initiative to show genuine care for the growth and development of the college preparatory students at School A, parents and students alike will see the significance and importance of teacher–parent partnerships. Thus, communication and a sense of belonging can establish and foster a foundation for teacher–parent partnerships at School A.

Recommendations for Practice

Teacher–parent partnerships at School A are an integral component in student preparedness for the academic rigor of college academics. Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are provided for School A:

- School administrators need to develop or provide formal training for developing teacher–parent partnerships. More formalized training needs to be provided to all teachers, and particularly teachers new to the field of education. To reduce fear of initiating teacher–parent partnerships, teachers need to be educated on how to facilitate partnerships with

parents that include mutual deference to each other's expertise and collaboration with students about their academic goals.

- Teachers need to include students when developing teacher–parent partnerships. Considering students integral parts of these partnership promotes their academic growth because it creates a sense of engagement and ownership in learning when the concentric systems between teachers and parents demonstrate support.

- School-wide formal and informal initiatives and programs for teachers and parents will facilitate, promote, and support the building of teacher–parent partnerships. These opportunities will help teachers and parents connect and get to know each other on a personal level and establish trustworthy relationships that can be used in teacher–parent partnerships. As a result, teachers and parents will be more inclined to work collaboratively because they are comfortable and have a connection with one another.

- School administration needs to continue the implementation and consider expansion of the 3-week email program as a way of initiating, building, and sustaining teacher–parent partnerships. This study's participants indicated the importance of this program. Expanding would provide teachers with continued support and skill development for facilitating teacher–parent partnerships.

- School administration needs to reach out to parents to identify parent and student needs in teacher–parent partnerships. Identifying these needs will help teachers focus on facilitating partnerships centered on them.

Recommendations for Future Research

The present study's findings suggest some areas for future research. Although the study results are not generalizable, future quantitative or qualitative studies involving more participants

may provide further insights into the teacher–parent phenomenon at religiously affiliated college preparatory schools. Increasing the number of research participants and including more religiously affiliated college preparatory schools may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of teacher–parent partnerships in these educational environments. Future research could also focus on the faith-based component of religiously affiliated college preparatory schools. Understanding this aspect may provide additional insights into understanding the sense of community in these schools and how it may factor into levels of engagement in teacher–parent partnerships.

Another recommendation is to investigate parent and student perceptions of teacher–parent partnerships and their expectations of faculty in these partnerships. This research could be beneficial to teachers because it might provide insights into the needs of parents and students in the collaborative process of partnerships. Additionally, future research should include parent and student perspectives of teacher-parent partnerships in religiously affiliated college preparatory schools. Understanding their expectations of faculty in these partnerships will help identify best practices for collaboration in teacher–parent partnerships.

Furthermore, as communication and collaboration were emphasized as critical competencies needed for teachers in teacher–parent partnerships at School A, it is essential that further research identifies the specific training and skills necessary for new and veteran teachers to develop and sustain teacher–parent partnerships. As emphasized in Bronfenbrenner's BST, adaptable and flexible attitudes and skills directly and indirectly impact student learning. Therefore, teachers need to develop attitudes and skills they can use in teacher–parent partnerships to directly and indirectly impact student learning. For school administrators to provide comprehensive and formal training programs for teachers in teacher–parent partnerships,

they must have an in-depth understanding of best practices that can be used for training these teachers.

Data provided from future research studies may help to provide further insights on how teachers, parents, and students perceive teacher–parent partnerships. The data may also shed light on how schools can provide structured teacher–parent partnerships with individualized action plans promoting student academic growth and development.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify secondary educators' perceptions of teacher–parent partnerships that best benefit students in a college preparatory religiously affiliated school. The study findings were supported through the lived experiences of the teacher participants and findings from the literature review conducted to inform this study. The results can be used to understand the phenomenon of teacher–parent partnerships in college preparatory high school learning environments. Additionally, the results contribute to the body of knowledge on teacher–parent partnerships by providing an understanding of the essence of these partnerships in secondary education. Thus, the evidence indicates the importance of teacher–parent partnerships in the overall academic growth and development of students at School A, a religiously affiliated college preparatory high school.

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Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval

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

Sarah Gates
Department of Education
Abilene Christian University

Dear   Sarah,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled
"Faculty Perceptions of Teacher-parent Partnerships at Parochial, College Preparatory Schools: A Case Study

(IRB# 20-001   )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

Our Promise: ACU is a vibrant, innovative, Christ-centered community that engages students in authentic spiritual and intellectual growth, equipping them to make a real difference in the world.

Appendix B: Letter to Participants

Date:

Dear _____,

I am completing a research study for my Ed.D. in Organizational Leadership from Abilene Christian University. I would like to request your participation in my research study about teacher–parent partnerships. The purpose of this research study is to identify secondary educators' perceptions of teacher–parent partnership that best benefit students. Through my research, I want to examine faculty perceptions of parental involvement in teacher–parent partnerships at parochial, college preparatory schools and also understand the competencies (skills) teachers think are necessary in effective teacher–parent partnerships.

As part of the data collection process, I would like to conduct a semistructured interview with you to gain your insight about teacher–parent partnerships at _____. The length of the interview will be between one hour and one and a half hours. Most importantly, your confidentiality will be maintained in this study. Your name will be changed to a pseudonym and audio recordings and interview transcriptions will be destroyed no later than one month after the completion of the dissertation. Also, all participants will be asked to provide verbal and written consent prior to the interview. Please see a copy of the enclosed written consent form. You may withdraw from this study at any time without any repercussions. If you would like to participate in this study, I will ask you to select a time that is most convenient for an interview.

Sincerely,

Sarah Gates
Doctoral Candidate, Abilene Christian University

Appendix C: Semistructured Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself and your role as a teacher.

2. What thoughts first come to mind when you hear the phrase "teacher–parent partnerships?"

3. How would you describe what happens in the context of a teacher–parent partnership at School A?

4. What experiences and outcomes have you had with teacher–parent partnerships (negative/positive)?

5. What is your perception regarding the effectiveness of teacher–parent partnerships at School A and why

6. What do you believe are factors that make for effective teacher–parent partnerships?

7. What skills must a teacher put into practice for the development and sustainability of effective teacher–parent partnerships?

8. In what ways do you approach teacher–parent partnerships with parents who are not as involved with their student's academic growth?

9. What types of classroom situations would prompt you to engage and collaborate with parents in a partnership and why?

10. What are your expectations of parents in teacher–parent partnerships?

11. Think about the teacher–parent partnerships that you have. Do you see any difference in the work ethic or intellectual ability between students of parents who are involved in teacher–parent partnerships and parents with whom there is limited or no communication?

12. How do you think other faculty respond to teacher–parent partnerships?

13. What would you describe as your personal strengths and challenges as it relates to building collaboration in teacher–parent partnerships?

14. How have teacher–parent partnerships changed over time in your experience or opinion?

15. What do you believe the return-value on teacher–parent partnerships can be for teachers? Parents? Students?

16. What kind of preparation have you received for working with parents in teacher–parent partnerships? RQ2

17. What type of support does School A provide you to help with teacher–parent partnerships?

18. What type of support do you think would be helpful to you regarding working with parents in teacher–parent partnerships?

19. Through your experiences, what have you learned about teacher–parent partnerships?

20. What kind of advice would you have for other teachers when developing and sustaining teacher–parent partnerships?