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Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Patricia A. Burns

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

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

Educators' Perspectives on Parent Engagement in Rural Title I Charter Schools

by

Patricia A. Burns

EdS, Grand Canyon University, 2014

MA, Grand Canyon University, 2009

BS, Keiser University, 2006

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

August 2020

Abstract

At a rural Title I charter school serving K-3 students in the Southeastern United States, educators have noted low levels of parent engagement. A low level of parent engagement can lead to low levels in student achievement. Educators wish to understand the benefits of parent engagement, barriers to parent engagement, benefits of parent engagement, barriers to parent engagement, and ways to increase parent engagement. The purpose of this basic qualitative study with interviews was to address the local problem by exploring rural Title I charter school educators' perspectives on benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for increasing parent engagement. Epstein's Six Types of Parental Involvement formed the conceptual framework of this study to explore perspectives of 12 educators (two administrators, eight teachers, two parent liaisons). The research questions focused on educators' perspectives on benefits of parent engagement, barriers to parent engagement, and ways to increase parent engagement. Data were collected from semi-structured interviews conducted with educators at 2 rural Title I charter schools serving K-3 students. Four themes emerged from data that were coded, as follows: (a) benefits of parent engagement; (b) barriers to parent engagement; (c) strategies that increase parent engagement; and (d) parent and teacher partnerships to support all stakeholders. A Professional Development Plan was created to increase educators' knowledge, skills, and understandings related to benefits of, barriers to, and strategies that increase parent engagement. The project may contribute to positive social change by leading to an increase in parent engagement in the local rural Title I charter school. Students' levels of academic achievement may increase in the district as educators apply what they learned through Professional Development.

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Dedication

I will like to dedicate my research work to my two children, my wonderful parents, loved ones, and close friends who believed in me through this tedious journey. To my loving children, Ja'Niya and Ja'Mari, thanks for putting up with me during my long nights of research and writing. I would like to thank you for bearing through this journey with me and pushing me to never give up or in on my dreams during those late nights of research and writing. To my late grandma, Ms. Cherry Lee Frison, thank you for believing in me and continue to pray for my success. Even in your death in 2014, I know you have been more than my guardian angel. To my parents, Patrick Sr. & Debra, I love you for creating such a hardworking, strong young lady. Thanks for all the prayers and motivation through this time. Thanks for believing in me. To my wonderful big sister Sherri, niece Chyanne, and nephews: Tyriek and D'Montaye, thank you for the wonderful laughs and family time when I need it during my overwhelming days and nights. You guys do not know how much this helped me made it through some tough times. To my big brother, Patrick, thanks for the motivation during our weekend visits, they meant so much to me. Last but not least, to my wonderful friends (Nicky, Dr. Denise, Ervin, Dr. Makeba, Tomura, Jennifer, and Vangela), thanks for being in my corner and helping me keep my head straight. I love you all for being a part of my life!

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

There is a low level of parent engagement in a local rural Title I charter school serving children in grades kindergarten through third grade (K-3). The local school administrator and the parent liaison recognized that a problem existed in the school because there was a lack of knowledge and understanding about educators' perspectives on benefits of, barriers to, and strategies to increase parent engagement in this rural Title I charter school serving K-3 students in the Southeastern region of the United States (U.S.). A personal conversation with the parent liaison of the rural Title I charter school allowed me to understand her concerns. The parent liaison shared the following:

Parent engagement could be better in our school. The only time we see a big turnout of parents is when programs or activities include their children. Though, when it comes to academics, we cannot get our parents out to teacher-parent conferences or even over the phone for a simple conversation about their children's academics. There is a Parent Engagement Policy developed with parents, but only a few parents were involved. We want to increase parent engagement to help our students. It is clear that K-3 educators have a role in increasing parent engagement. (Parent Liaison, personal communication, March 4, 2019)

The parent liaison reported that there was also a low level of parent participation in an annual climate survey conducted during the 2018-2019 school year in the same local

school; and school leaders wondered if this lack of parent participation could be related to a lack of encouragement by teachers (Parent Liaison, personal communication, March 4, 2019). At the time of the survey, there was a total of 80 parents with children enrolled in grades K-3 in the school; however, out of the 80 parents, only 17 parents (22%) participated in the survey. The breakdown of the survey results indicated that there were three parent participants (7%) from Grade K, three parent participants (7%) from Grade 1, 11 parent participants (14%) from Grade 2, and no parent participants (0%) from Grade 3. Three percent of the 17 parents who completed the survey indicated that their interactions with staff at the school were "useless." Another 12 percent of the parents indicated that their interactions with staff were "uncomfortable and distant" (Climate & Culture Parent Survey, February 2019). This survey increased the parent liaison's interest in learning more about educators' perspectives on parent engagement (Parent Liaison, personal communication, March 4, 2019). Local school leaders have noted a need to gain educators' perspectives related to the low level of parent engagement in this school.

Educators and parents play major roles in the educational successes of students when they partner to provide positive learning experiences, support, motivation, and quality instruction (Baker, Wise, Kelley, & Skiba, 2016; Matthews, McPherson-Berg, Quinton, Rotunda, & Morote, 2017; Li & Fischer, 2017). Matthews et al. (2017) suggested that the academic achievement of students depends upon the extent of parent involvement present in the schools. Li and Fischer (2017) indicated parents can be involved in their children's education in numerous ways. According to Đurišić and Bunjevac (2017), with increased demands on families, parent support of their children's

education extends beyond the school building and into the home. This view was also supported by Matthews et al. (2017) and Sawyer (2015). Baker et al. (2016) suggested further research is needed to understand how expanding educators' views of the importance of moving from parent involvement to parent engagement, proposing that parent engagement includes multiple constructions of how parents are engaged in their children's education. This included parent engagement in rural Title I schools (Mandarakas, 2014) and charter schools (Sawyer, 2015). Sawyer (2015) found that few studies have investigated administrators' and teachers' perspectives on parent engagement in charter schools. Several studies have looked at educators' perspectives of parent engagement in a number of settings (Baker et al., 2016; Erdener, 2016; Kuru Cetin & Taskin, 2016); however, studies investigating parent engagement in schools that are a combination of rural, low-income, and charter schools are limited. The problem addressed by this basic qualitative study with interviews is the lack of knowledge about educators' perspectives on benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for increasing parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools serving K-3 students. This basic qualitative study with interviews sought to address a gap in the research on practice by exploring rural Title I charter school educators' perspectives on benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for increasing parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools serving K-3 students.

The motivation for this project study came from the rural Title I charter school where I am employed. The basic qualitative study with interviews was not conducted in my local school, but was conducted in two rural Title I charter schools located in a

neighboring community within in one state in the Southeastern U.S. The two schools that was the settings for my study are ones that are separate from my employment and professional or personal engagement or influence.

Rationale

On the national level, there is limited research on parent engagement in low-income schools (Baker, Wise, Kelley, & Skiba, 2016; Erdener, 2016; Matthews et al., 2017). Most research on parent engagement has been conducted in schools that do not serve diverse, low-income families (Baker et al., 2016; Erdener, 2016, Kuru Cetin & Taskin, 2016; Matthews, McPherson-Berg, Quinton, Rotunda, & Morote, 2017; Sawyer, 2015). Several researchers suggested that additional studies to explore parent engagement and involvement for low-income families are needed (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Ule, Živoder, & du Bois-Reymond, 2015; Wang, Deng, & Yang, 2016). Ule et al. (2015) emphasized that many low-income parents realize the future of their children's success depends on the work of teachers and, to a great and growing degree, on their own roles as co-educators. Rose and Stein (2014) found that many educators have the desire to increase parent involvement throughout low income Title I schools nationally. Effective communication between educators and families is dependent upon school personnel's efforts to reach out to and engage parents (Leithwood & Patrician, 2015).

In the local school, efforts have been made by school personnel to increase two-way communication between parents and educators. While strides have been made, documentation of outreach efforts yielded lower results than anticipated for the 2018-2019 school year (Parent Liaison, personal communication, February 25, 2019; March 4,

2019). The education act, *No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act* of 2001 (United States Department of Education, 2002), and more recently *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015* (United States Department of Education, 2017), addressed the roles that parents play in their children's education. Under ESSA and the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*, parents are to partner with schools, which includes their involvement in writing a Parent and Family Engagement Plan for the school (United States Department of Education, 2017). Per ESEA, the plan presents an agreement that educators will ensure that parents and families are engaged in the planning process. Parents' engagement is necessary to meet requirements that promote parent engagement with school personnel, and support parents and families in doing so to ensure student learning and success (United States Department of Education, 2017). According to the parent liaison, the school's Parent and Family Engagement Plan was developed in partnership between the local school personnel and parents and families in planning for the 2018-2019 academic year (personal communication, March 4, 2019). As of September 2019, an annual climate survey has not been conducted for the 2019-2020 school year. The purpose of this basic qualitative study with interviews sought to address a gap in practice at the local level, as well as a gap in the research on practice, by exploring educators' perspectives on benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for increasing parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools serving K-3 students. The intention of this study was to explore educators' perspectives on parent engagement in two rural Title I charter schools.

Definition of Terms

The following terms and definitions are provided to add clarity for readers:

Charter school: A charter school is a public school that, in accordance with an enabling state statute, has been granted a charter exempting it from select state or local rules and regulations. A charter school may be a newly created school, or it may previously have been a regular or private school (Tourkin et al., 2010).

Educators: The term educators is defined in the context of parent involvement by Epstein et al. (2009) and Young, Austin, and Grove (2013) as administrators, guidance counselors, teachers, coaches, community and youth group leaders, and parents; however, for this study, the term educators is limited to administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers.

Educator perspective: An educator perspective defines the way educators feel about the roles of parents within the school and home context and how parent involvement/engagement experiences affect the academic success of students (Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013).

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): ESSA was signed on December 10, 2015 by President Obama and reauthorized the 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the nation's education law and longstanding commitment to equal opportunity and access to all students. The ESSA builds on key areas of progress in recent years made possible by the efforts of educators, communities, parents, and students across the country (United States Department of Education, 2017).

Family engagement: Family engagement is a shared responsibility among families and educators, continuous from birth to young adulthood, and reinforced across multiple learning contexts (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2014).

Parent engagement: Parent engagement is a shared responsibility in which schools are committed to reaching out to engage parents in meaningful ways, and parents are committed to actively supporting their children's and adolescents' learning and development (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012).

Title I: The beginning section of the ESEA aims to promote the development of programs for America's most disadvantaged children and improve each student's education in high poverty schools to meet State academic performance standards. This is the largest federal education funding program. It provided funding for high poverty schools to help students who are behind academically or at risk of falling behind (United States Department of Education, 2002).

Title I school: A school that receives Title I government funds based on the following: (a) the percentage of low-income students in the school is equal to or as high as the district's overall percentage; or (b) the percentage of low-income students is at least 35 (United States Department of Education, 2002).

Significance of the Study

It is understood that both educators and parents play major roles in the educational successes of students when they partner to provide positive learning experiences, support, motivation, and quality instruction (Li & Fischer, 2017; Matthews

et al., 2017). Few studies have investigated administrators' and teachers' perspectives of parent engagement in charter schools serving K-3 students (Sawyer, 2015). Because research on educators' perspectives of parent engagement in rural Title I schools (Mandarakas, 2014) and charter schools (Sawyer, 2015) is limited, this study contributed to a gap in practice at the local level and in the literature on practice related to parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools. Exploring educators' perspectives on benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for increasing parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools is potentially important to increase understanding of all stakeholders at the local level, state level, and nationally, so that they may join forces to address particular problems or concerns about school-related issues through increased parent engagement.

Research Questions

To frame the questions in relation to the local problem of the lack of knowledge about educators' perspectives on benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for increasing parent engagement in rural Title I charter school serving K-3 students, this basic qualitative study with interviews explored educators' perspectives on benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for increasing parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools serving K-3 students. Research questions used to investigate the nature of the problem and the best solution to the problem were framed by the conceptual framework which is based on Epstein's (1995) *Six Types of Parent Involvement*. The three guiding research questions (RQ) of the study, as follows:

RQ 1: What are rural Title I charter school educators' (administrators, teachers, parent liaison) perspectives on the benefits of parent engagement?

RQ 2: What are rural Title I charter school educators' (administrators, teachers, parent liaison) perspectives on the barriers to parent engagement?

RQ 3: What are the perspectives of rural Title I charter school educators' (administrators, teachers, parent liaison) of strategies that increase parent engagement?

Review of the Literature

For the review of the literature, I conducted an examination of previous research on parent engagement and parent involvement in general and specifically sought research on rural Title I charter schools. I examined a variety of peer-reviewed journal articles, in addition to other sources to find information related to educators' perspective of benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools. My searches revealed that researchers have suggested that further studies are needed to understand educators' views about the importance of parent engagement and proposed that parents can become engaged in their children's education in multiple ways both in school and at home (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017, Holloway & Kunesh, 2015, Llamas & Tuazon, 2016). Baker et al. (2016) suggested studies should be undertaken to understand how teachers work with parents and their attitudes about parent engagement. I also explored dissertations when peer-reviewed journal articles or book chapters related to my topic were scarce.

The phenomenon that grounds the study comes from educators noting low levels of parent engagement. A low level of parent engagement can lead to low levels in student achievement. Parent engagement is not a topic that is new to the education system in the

United States. Parent engagement with schools in support of their children's education extends beyond the school building and into the home (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Matthews et al., 2017; Sawyer, 2015). However, parents in the local school are not as engaged in their children's education as educators believe they should be and district and school administrators look to the teachers for answers. Therefore, the purpose of this basic qualitative study with interviews was to address the local problem by exploring rural Title I charter school educators' perspectives on benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for increasing parent engagement. The next section of this project study includes the conceptual framework and a comprehensive review of literature on this topic.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that grounds this study was based on Epstein's (1995) model of *Six Types of Parent Involvement* and updated examples of each type by Epstein et al. (2009). This model allowed me to understand types of involvement in K-3 schools that potentially engage parents and families in two rural Title I charter schools serving K-3 students. According to Epstein (1995), parents are involved in “parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community” (p. 16).

Parenting. The first type of involvement involves establishing home environments that support children as students. When at home, parents should be able to provide food and shelter with a healthy but positive living environment where they can

eat, sleep, and stay warm or dry from different types of weather conditions (Epstein et al., 2009).

Communicating. The second type of involvement involves designing an effective form of school-to-home communications about school programs and the progression of children. Parents can communicate with teachers and school via the phone (text messages and phone calls), emails, and/or constant classroom visits (Epstein et al., 2009).

Volunteering. The third type of involvement involves being able to recruit and organize parent's help and support. Parents can volunteer during school-based activities such as spring and fall carnivals, Christmas programs, sports concession, and Parent Expo/PTO/PTA programs (Epstein et al., 2009).

Learning at home. The fourth type of involvement is involved in providing the information and the ideas to families about helping students with their homework and other related curriculum activities, decisions, and plans. With learning at home, schools should provide opportunities of learning for parents assisting their children with their homework and other activities of learning (Epstein et al., 2009).

Decision making. The fifth type of involvement involves including the parents in decisions at schools, develop parent into leaders and representatives. Parents can make sure they attend their children's parent conferences as well as playing a role in the parent-teacher association (PTA) (Epstein et al., 2009).

Collaborating with the community. The sixth type of involvement is involved in identifying and integrating the resources and the services of the community in programs that strengthen the school, practices of families, and students learning and development.

When in the community, collaboration should consist of activities and programs that will educate families on resources that will strengthen the families and students physically, emotionally, and academically (Epstein et al, 2009).

Summary of conceptual framework. The key elements of this framework come from Epstein (1995) and Epstein et al. (2009) and focus on the *Six Types of Parent Involvement*. The framework guided the development of the research questions and methodology for this study, and influenced the development of the semistructured, open-ended interview questions for educators. The conceptual framework for this basic qualitative study with interviews will also guide the analysis of data which will frame my interpretation and discussion of my findings.

Review of Broader Problem

Search Strategy

The goal of this literature review was to provide an in-depth view of the literature that is available and relevant to the study. Specific terms related to the topic of parental engagement that were used during the database browses were as follows: (a) Epstein's *Six Types of Parent Involvement*, (b) *educators' perspectives on parent engagement*, (c) *teachers' perspectives on parent engagement*, (d) *stakeholders' perspectives on parent engagement*, (e) *parent involvement*, (f) *parent engagement*, (g) *family engagement*, (h) *parent involvement*, and (i) *parent engagement*. I met with the EdD librarian on three occasions to learn how to explore and choose databases of articles in peer-reviewed journals and other sources related to educators' perspective of benefits of, barriers to, and strategies of parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools. The first meeting was to

learn how to explore and choose databases to broaden my search. The second time was to focus on additional sources of peer-reviewed articles. My search to find research studies exclusively on educators' perspectives on parent involvement or engagement in rural schools that were both Title I and charter schools that serve K-3 students were unsuccessful. My search did not reveal studies that have been conducted in schools with a combination of Title I and charter schools. On the third occasion, the librarian assisted me in searching databases for the following terms: *rural, Title I, charter schools, elementary, early childhood, parent involvement, parent engagement, parent participation*. These searches were also unsuccessful. I conducted the searches by browsing the following databases: Google Scholar, ERIC, ProQuest, SAGE, PsycINFO Online, Annie E. Casey (1 article related to public schools instead), Bloomsbury (no results), Childcare and Early Education Research (three articles but none related to my topic), Child Stats (no results), CQ Researcher (six articles but none related to my topic), DOAJ (no results), Academic ASAP (no results), Education Source (no results), Kaiser (four articles but none related to my topic), NAMI (no results), ProjectMUSE (nineteen articles but specifically on higher education), PsycArticles (no results), and SocINDEX (no results). In conducting searches for relevant documents, I searched for articles that examined educators' perspective of parent engagement in charter schools, but there was only one article that included an investigation of educators' perspectives. Next, I examined other literature by seeking studies in rural Title I public schools. This examination was not successful either.

Researchers indicated that educators and parents both play major roles in the educational successes of students when they partner to provide positive learning experiences, support, motivation, and quality instruction (Baker et al., 2016; Li & Fischer, 2017; Matthews et al., 2017). Parent engagement with schools in support of their children's education extends beyond the school building and into the home (Đurišić & Bunjevac, 2017; Matthews et al., 2017; Sawyer, 2015). Baker et al. (2016) suggested further research is needed to understand educators' views about the importance of moving from parent involvement to parent engagement in school and in the home. There are multiple constructions of how parents engaged in their children's education in Title I schools (Mandarakas, 2014), charter schools (Sawyer, 2015), and rural schools (Robinson & Volpè, 2015). Several researchers have looked at educators' perspectives of parent engagement in a number of settings (Baker et al., 2016; Erdener, 2016; Kuru Cetin & Taskin, 2016); however, my searches did not reveal studies investigating parent engagement in schools that are rural, Title I, and charter schools. Sawyer (2015) found that few studies have investigated administrators' and teachers' perspectives on parent engagement in charter schools and suggested additional studies that identify educators' perspectives are needed. The problem addressed by this basic qualitative study with interviews is the lack of knowledge about educators' perspectives on benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for increasing parent engagement in rural Title I charter school serving K-3 students. This review of the literature focused on parent engagement. It included literature that described parent involvement and parent engagement in schools serving diverse families such as charter schools and Title I schools. Three peer-reviewed journal

articles that addressed the topic of parent engagement in schools serving diverse families were from Povey et al. (2016) in an Australian school setting, Torre and Murphy (2016) in no specified location but to meet the twenty-first century aims for schools, and Yakamoto et al. (2016) in an early childhood setting in Japan. These researchers examined ways to engage parents in schools and children's education (Povey et al., 2016; Torre & Murphy, 2016; Yakamoto et al., 2016). The literature review that follows provides information about the following: schools serving diverse families; the importance of parent engagement in children's education; factors influencing parent involvement; benefits and barriers to parent engagement; strategies for parent engagement; implications; and a summary for the section.

Parent Engagement in Schools Serving Diverse Families

Charter Schools

What is a charter school? According to Prothero (2018) a charter school is a tuition-free school of choice that is publicly funded but independently run. Charter schools educate only a small share of the nation's public-school students at about six percent (6%) (Prothero, 2018). Some charter schools have taken a proactive approach to establish programs that can incorporate parent involvement systemically into their school operations. The practices of charter schools ranged from creating a parent governing board to require parents to participate in school events. For example, parents should play an active role in school decision-making, take on the responsibility that includes financing, facilitate the acquisition, as well as take accountability for student learning (National Resource Center on Charter School Finance & Governance, n.d.).

Some research has been conducted comparing charter schools and traditional schools (Rose & Stein, 2014). Rose and Stein (2014) examined the extent to which organizational and teacher-level characteristics accounted for cross-sector variation in teacher outreach using a matched sample of charter and traditional schools. Rose and Stein (2014) found that teachers in charter schools attempted to engage with parents more frequently than teachers in the matched traditional school due to the outreach efforts made by teachers in the charter school. Due to the sample size, this finding was not generalizable; however, Rose and Stein (2014) suggested that the importance of teacher outreach is not limited to the charter schools.

Title I Schools

What is a Title I school? Title I schools provide services that enhance as well as support regular classroom programs (Clark, 2019). Title I schools received funds for Title I students to assist and meet the school's educational goals in schools with the highest concentration of poverty in public schools where most children are from low-income families. Title I schools have become a key piece of the ESSA, ESEA, and NCLB Acts to help focus on the low-income parents of children being served. Title I schools are typically demographically and economically diverse, including parent and family diversity in the areas of race, ethnicity, culture, age, family structure, gender, and socioeconomic status. Title I schools and programs offer activities for parents and families to be engaged in schools. Under Title I fund, schools must conduct outreach to parents and family members and must implement programs, activities, and procedures for the involvement of parents and families in Title I schools (Leadership Conference

Education Fund, 2016). Title I schools have created policies that will allow parents to be involved in school activities that can ensure they effectively engage parents and families with shared responsibilities for improving student achievement as well as develop partnerships to help students achieve state standards.

Li and Fischer (2017) proposed that parents can be involved in children's education in numerous ways in Title I elementary schools, which includes children at the early childhood stages in K-3 grade levels. Administrators, guidance counselors, teachers, and parents joined forces to address problems or concerns about school-related issues through parent involvement. They were also engaged in different organizational contexts, including parent-teacher organizations (PTOs or PTAs), that support a range of activities that serve the school community. Li and Fischer (2017) found that strong parent-family-community partnerships are key to addressing school dropout rates by fostering higher educational aspirations in students.

Rural Schools

What are rural schools? Rural schools are characterized by their geographic isolation as well as the small population size. They are classified as schools with high needs. Rural schools have benefited from political support in the form of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 (Eppley & Shannon, 2017). According to Eppley and Shannon (2017), the ESEA is designed to support children's learning experiences in schools marked by inequalities based on socioeconomic status, race, immigrant status, and geospatial location.

According to Robinson and Volpè (2015), many rural school parents are reluctant to participate in activities in their child's school. In rural schools, educators have uncertainty about how to engage high-poverty parents. School personnel in low-income contexts "tend to disregard parents' input as misguided or even ignorant" (Robinson & Volpè, 2015, p. 81). Researchers indicated that there continues to be a lack of understanding by all stakeholders and a void in research on the engagement experiences of high-poverty parents from rural communities in schools (Semke & Sheridan, 2012). As such, it is difficult for educators to identify appropriate methods for involving and working with parents from underrepresented and high-poverty groups in schools (Epstein, 2011; Kroeger, 2014). "To create greater understandings between parents and to minimize alienation that may occur amongst the parent population, school staff should work with parent leaders to develop greater receptivity to parents who are not consistently involved with schools" (Robinson & Volpè, 2015, p.79).

Parent Engagement in Children's Education

Culture of Engagement

This section will present studies that are related to the importance of creating a culture of engagement between parents and educators. The following studies examined parent engagement in children's education during their early childhood years. When parents, families, school personnel, and community members work together in support of students' learning, students earning higher grades, regularly attending school, stay in school longer, make a stronger school home-school partnership, and enroll in higher-level programs (Stefanski, Valli, & Jacobson, 2016). Torre and Murphy (2016) presented a

fourth-generation model of school–family linkages and found benefits included increased parent and teacher capacity and efficacy as a result of engagement. Torre and Murphy (2016) found that establishing a culture of engagement as a component of the school vision increased children’s self-esteem, motivation, and learning outcomes. Torre and Murphy (2016) suggested the importance of building a culture of engagement as a component of the school vision in order to increased parent and teacher capacity and efficacy.

Marin and Bocoş (2017) explored factors that influenced family engagement in children’s education at the beginning of primary education. Researchers concluded that common efforts by both the school personnel and family members are necessary to strengthen school-family partnerships and increase family participation in school activities (Marin & Bocoş, 2017). Yakamoto, Holloway, and Suzuki (2016) examined teacher outreach efforts to build community and found that teacher invitations encouraged maternal engagement in schools. Marin and Bocos (2017) recommended further studies are needed to identify strategies that teachers use to encourage parents to become partners in the education of their children to strengthen school-family partnerships.

Leithwood and Patrician (2015) explored the relative effectiveness of alternative types of school interventions on parent engagement and found that communications between parents and schools are central to productive parent-school partnerships. Further, there is no one form of communication that works well in all circumstances and with all parents (Leithwood & Patrician, 2015). Researchers have suggested that schools should

ask parents which forms of communication work best for them, and then be willing to make changes to adapt to parents' preferences and needs (Leithwood & Patrician, 2015).

According to Stefanski et al. (2016), literature on the role of the family in partnership models is consistent with an underlying theory of action for school-community partnerships. The theory of action outlines a plan that demonstrates how school personnel should operate in collaboration with families and community members to achieved goals of mutual benefit such as students' academic achievement. More complex and comprehensive forms of partnerships must increase ways in which family members can meaningfully participate in school-community partnerships and have a voice in decision-making. Stefanski et al. (2016) suggested supporting leadership development and bridging the traditional power gaps that often exist between public institutions and families, especially those who live in high-poverty areas.

Factors Influencing Parent Involvement

Socioeconomic Status

Child Trends, an organization that provides data for public policy analysis and engagement, reported differences in engagement by parents of students with family household income levels below the federal poverty level (FPL). For parents of P-3 students, Child Trend (2018) reported lower levels of parent volunteerism in their children's schools or classrooms when the family incomes were below the FPL. Child Trends reported data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, which indicated that in 2016, 27% of parents from families in poverty participated in volunteer activities at school, compared to 47% of parents from

families who are above the FPL (Child Trends, 2018). Child Trend also indicated differences for parents attending school or class events by income levels. In 2016, the differences in attendance by income was illustrated by revealing 93% of parent attendance by families not living in poverty as compared to 62% of parent attendance by families living in poverty (Child Trend, 2018). McQuiggan and Megra (2017) reported that parents below the FPL often have work schedules that make participating in classroom volunteerism and attending school functions difficult. Researchers also noted that there are differences by English language fluency, with low participation when parents have difficulty communicating with school staff (McQuiggan & Megra, 2017).

Kuru Cetin and Taskin (2016) examined administrators, teachers, and parents' viewpoints on parent involvement in the education process of their children by focusing on socio-economic statuses of families with children in public and private primary and secondary schools. Kuru Cetin and Taskin (2016) found that parents from different socio-economic backgrounds tend to have similar views about the parent engagement process because of their school-family interactions. Researchers found that parent training or parent education is not systematic even when families' socio-economic status is high (Kuru Cetin & Taskin, 2016). Researchers recommended increasing parent involvement by engaging the school counselors and guidance services at schools (Kuru Cetin & Taskin, 2016).

Povey et al. (2016) suggested parent-school partnerships and strong parent engagement in schools depend on a positive school climate and principal leadership. According to Povey et al. (2016) the results of the Principal and Parent and Citizens

President surveys are presented together in the following order: perceived benefits of parent engagement, perceived barriers to parent engagement, effective engagement methods, parent volunteerism, principal's expectations, principal leadership, parent-school relationships and communication. There was evidence that some parents may either choose not to be involved with schools or may face significant barriers in doing so; this does not, however, reflect a lack of desire to be involved in their children's learning (Povey et al., 2016).

Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) examined administrators', teachers', and parents' viewpoints on parent involvement of families based on their socio-economic status in public and private primary and secondary schools. Researchers found differences in parent involvement in education of their children between families enrolled in public and private schools. Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) recommended that school administrators take a more active role in encouraging participation of parents in decision-making processes. They further recommended more studies investigating parents' engagement in decision-making processes with families (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017).

Gokturk and Dinckal (2018) explored how teachers make sense of parent involvement of middle to high socioeconomic status (SES) parents with whom they share similar cultural capital. Gokturk and Dinckal (2018) found that there are often misunderstandings and tensions among parents and teachers over the roles each play due to time and financial constraints. These researchers recommend future studies are needed to understand the links related to socio-economic status of parents and parent engagement (Gokturk & Dinckal, 2018).

Naqvi, Carey, Cummins, and Altidor-Brooks (2015) found that immigrant parents from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds will actively engage with the school community when invited to participate. When school personnel work to involve parents in sessions based on story-telling, sharing personal experiences, and reading and writing stories about identity and diversity, they will participate (Naqvi et al., 2015). Researchers concluded that there is considerable pay off for schools and students in enabling immigrant parents. School personnel should be encouraged to recognize immigrant family members' expertise and cultural capital in social contexts (Naqvi et al., 2015).

Academic Achievement

Tárraga García, García Fernández, and Reyes Ruiz-Gallardo (2018) investigated home-based family involvement and academic achievement in primary-grade education. Findings revealed that, for this study, home-family involvement was not a determinant of academic achievement of primary-grade students (Tárraga García et al., 2018). According to Tárraga García et al. (2018), further research is needed to explain the effects of parent involvement on academic achievement in a wider sample from diverse educational contexts.

Fajoju, Aluede, and Ojugo (2016) investigated the relationship between parent involvement in children's education and academic success of primary pupils in Edo State, Nigeria. Results indicated parent involvement significantly influenced pupils' academic achievements in three core subjects -- English language, mathematics and integrated science (Fajoju et al., 2016). Fajoju et al. (2016) recommended that researchers and educational stakeholders should empower schools with a range of tested practices for

involving parents in children's academic achievement. Researchers further recommended involving school counselors and educational psychologists in engaging parents in children's academic programs (Fajoju et al., 2016).

Kimaro and Machumu (2015) identified that positive relationships between parents and teachers resulted from parents' involvement in school activities. Based on their research, Kimaro and Machumu (2015) noted the overlap of types of parent involvement that exist based on Epstein's model. A parent involvement questionnaire as well as children academic questionnaire was administered to 288 children and 125 teachers from six primary schools. In the study there was a positive significant relationship between parent involvement in school activities and academic standing ($r=.766$, $p < .01$) and the provision of key school items related to schooling outcomes ($r=.733$, $p < .01$). Therefore, parent-teacher conferences as well as parent-teacher contacts were perceived as desirable modes communications that impact children's school academic achievement (Kimaro & Machumu, 2015).

Caño, Cape, Mar Cardoso, Miot, Pitogo, Quinio, and Merin (2016) used Epstein's framework on the different parenting styles and the model's effect on bridging the gap between parents, students, and school routines. Their study pointed out that parent involvement had a positive impact on students' academic performance. Caño et al. proposed that parent involvement in schools is more than attending homeroom and meetings. Based on their findings, students accomplished more when their parents anticipated more (Caño et al, 2016). Caño et al. supported the view from earlier studies of

Epstein's model. It provided Cano et al. (2016) with a well-defined and useful guideline that others can follow.

Benefits of and Barriers to Parent Engagement

In this section, I will present literature on the benefits of and barriers to parent and family engagement. Much of the literature on parent engagement focuses on family engagement. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (2014) defines parent engagement as a shared responsibility among families and educators, continuous from birth to young adulthood, and reinforced across multiple learning contexts. Information on barriers and benefits to parent and family engagement reveals what is perceived as important, as well as what is overlooked by educators.

Barriers

Baker et al. (2016) reframed the notions of parent involvement in parent engagement by using thematic analysis to apply five themes that are common to both families and staff. Baker et al. (2016) suggested these themes to be employed in schools to eliminate some of the barriers to parent engagement perceived by families. These themes included the following: providing opportunities for involvement; improving communication; welcoming families into schools; making time; and moving from involvement to engagement. Parents who did not experience success in school may view it negatively. Baker et al. (2016) suggested that the language, curriculum, and staff intimidated the parents; consequently, parents avoided communicating with the school. The findings of this study showed parents and school staff agreed on barriers to parent involvement but offer contrasting solutions. Findings also suggested that parent solutions

addressing the barriers identified and supporting parent engagement, however, the staff in the study offered disconnected solutions and reiterated the necessity of parents being present in schools, rather than a broad view of parent engagement (Baker et al., 2016).

Many studies on parent involvement/engagement have been conducted with little regard to diverse cultures or low-income family contexts (Ule et al., 2015). Researchers suggested that perceived barriers to parent engagement may have been overlooked (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Ule et al., 2015). Hornby and Blackwell (2018) discussed four types of barriers to the establishment of effective parent involvement in education. Among the different factors are an individual parent and family barriers, child factors, parent-teacher factors, and societal factors; however, despite competing factors, parent involvement in education is essential to children's academic success. Researchers recommended that a positive pattern of parent involvement in education is needed and that the gap between rhetoric and the reality of parent involvement may be closing (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018).

Wang et al. (2016) examined the influence of two neighboring processes in parents – the expectation for children's highest educational attainment and perceived barriers to involvement. Wang et al. (2016) linked family economic status, parents' level of education, and the involvement of parents in children's education. Findings highlighted the unique effects of economic status and parents' level of education on parents' involvement in their children's education (Wang et al., 2016). Researchers suggested that additional studies related to the impact of SES on parent involvement are needed (Wang et al., 2016).

Soutullo, Smith-Bonahue, Sanders-Smith, and Navia (2016) investigated barriers to facilitating family-school partnerships with immigrant families. Various factors were identified by teachers in an urban school district with high rates of immigration. Teachers believed that the screening policy was discouraging for immigrant families (Soutullo et al., 2016). Researchers suggested screening policies prevent immigrant families from volunteering in their children's classrooms and called for the development of knowledgeable and culturally responsive practitioners and scholars to address this issue (Soutullo et al., 2016). Soutullo et al. (2016) recommended more studies about barriers to parent involvement are needed in diverse settings, especially in schools that work with immigrant children and families.

Luet (2015) explored opportunities for and barriers to parent engagement in a small urban school district. Luet's (2015) findings questioned claims that parents are not involved and suggested that parent involvement may look different for low-income and/or minority families. Luet (2015) recommended that policymakers work from the perspectives that low-income and minority parents are engaged and invested partners in educational reform. When policymakers take a strengths-based approach to parent engagement, they move from trying to reform parents to the task of reforming the schools themselves (Luet, 2015).

Benefits

Research indicated that all stakeholders benefitted from parent engagement as parents' partner with educators to contribute to their children's growth, development, and academic achievement (Matthews et al., 2017; Sawyer, 2015) and to school improvement

(Erdener, 2016; Povey et al., 2016). Educators benefitted from parent engagement by increasing the number of adults capable of helping educators pursue and meet curricular standards (Erdener, 2016; Povey et al., 2016; Sawyer, 2015). Researchers have acknowledged that many parent valued and recognized the importance of involvement in their child's education (Asian, 2016; Erdener, 2016).

Aslan (2016) emphasized that parent involvement is believed to be a very important contributor toward student achievement in school systems across America. Everett (2016) found that by holding parents and students accountable for positive academic outcomes, the potential benefits are increased academic gains and graduation rates.

Ma, Shen, Krenn, Hu, and Yuan (2016) examined the relationship between the learning outcomes of children and educational involvement of parents during early childhood and early elementary education. Findings indicated parent involvement during children's early years tended to establish more productive relationships with positive learning outcomes as children progress to upper grades in elementary school. According to Ma et al. (2016) in order to form a strong relationship, the keys to family involvement included communication between parents and school personnel about behavioral involvement, home supervision, and home-school communications and connections. Ma et al. (2016) suggested that the keys to partnership development come from respectful communication and effective leadership in relation to the communicating with families and children, in addition to an institutionalized authentic partnership.

Strategies for Parent Engagement

In this section of the literature review, I present strategies identified in a variety of studies related to parent involvement or engagement. Baker et al. (2016) recognized the need to expand educators' views and for schools to move from parent involvement to parent engagement, which involves parents' engagement in their children's education beyond the school setting. Parent engagement involves parent participation in school activities, student learning, and parent meetings. Parent engagement suggests concepts of partnership and collaboration, as well as a meaningful link based on shared purposes between parents and educators (Baker et al., 2016).

Llamas and Tuazon (2016) discussed various ways schools are involving parents in the education of their children. Their findings denoted that with parent engagement in schools, parents acquired skills in creating a learning environment for their children at home, established commendable relations with the school and other families, and gained self-awareness and confidence. Llamas and Tuazon's framework enabled educators to develop effective programs designed to bring school, family, and community together in a positive manner. The school was encouraged to conduct surveys on parent involvement that enquires about parents' opinions and impressions, teachers' attitudes and beliefs, and ways and means by which teacher-parent collaboration can be strengthened. Researchers stressed the need to analyze different views of respondent groups and come up with a program that will address the identified barriers to school practices in parent involvement (Llamas & Tuazon, 2016).

Jeynes (2018) introduced a practical model to help guide leaders/managers in supporting parent involvement and engagement in schools. The model was called Dual

Navigation Approach (DNA). The results revealed that parents perceived that teachers are the specialists of education. The specific components of the DNA model were divided into two categories: home-oriented and school-oriented involvement and engagement. The family-based components noted were high expectations, parent style, reading with children, and household rules. The school-based components included a partnership with the teacher, communication between parents and the teacher/school, check homework, participation/attendance, and drawing from community resources. Jeynes (2018) suggested school leaders and teachers need to desire and accept parent participation and parents need to desire to become involved. Therefore, both the school and parents need to work together to reach the same goals that are family-based and school-based (Jeynes, 2018).

Malone (2015) argued there are potential challenges that can create poor understanding and limited integration between parents' and educators' perceptions of appropriate parent involvement practices. Malone found that there are three potential strategies for removing cultural challenges. These are, as follows: create a welcoming climate; promote effective communication; and raise cultural awareness (Malone, 2015). Ultimately, Malone (2015) suggested training all school personnel to interact positively with parents from diverse cultures may result in increased PI and increased student achievement.

Implications

Since 2018 to the present time, there has been a major concern with low levels of parent engagement in the rural Title I charter school that prompted this study. There is

also a lack of knowledge and understanding about how school personnel can encourage parent engagement (see Baker et al., 2016) and follow a strengths-based approach when engaging parents (see Luet, 2015). Therefore, this basic qualitative study with interviews explored educator's perspectives on benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for parent engagement in two rural Title 1 charter schools serving K-3 students. Implications of this study resulted in providing insights into the development of a parent engagement plan tailored to meet the needs of the families served in the local school located in the Southeastern United States.

A possible project that could be based on the findings from this study is the development of a manual for educators that includes a parent engagement policy that is grounded in a code of ethical conduct and statement of commitment. Another project could be drafting a position paper and model for parent engagement in the context of a rural Title I school that strengthened partnerships in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This study has the potential to inform positive social change by leading to an increase in parent engagement in the local rural Title I charter schools.

Summary

Section 1 provided information about the local problem in relation to a broader problem, a rationale for the proposed study, definitions for key terms, significance of the study, conceptual framework, research questions, and a review of the literature. The comprehensive literature review presented search strategies and an overview of topics related to parent engagement in general, and specifically included information on parent engagement with diverse populations, such as are found in rural Title I charter schools.

Section 2 provides the methodology of the study, data collection and analysis, and results of the study.

Section 2: The Methodology

This basic qualitative study with interviews sought to explore educators' perspectives on benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools serving K-3 students. The study's design followed from the problem that exists at the local level in a rural Title I charter school located in the Southeastern U.S. The gap in the literature on practice increases for rural Title I charter schools where research is limited (Baker et al., 2016; Erdener, 2016; Matthews et al., 2017).

Research Design

A basic qualitative study with interviews was the best method to study the phenomenon because researchers who use the basic qualitative method seek to understand the perspectives of a group of people by collecting detailed but descriptive data (Creswell, 2017). By interviewing educators, I gained information about their perspectives that resulted in rich, detailed, and descriptive data. I was able to explore common experiences of the educators to learn their perspectives on benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for increasing parent engagement.

Qualitative researchers use a variety of designs to gather data, such as the following: phenomenology, case study, and basic qualitative study. A basic qualitative study with interviews was chosen for this research because data collected from interviews provided an opportunity to capture rich, detailed, and descriptive data that were true responses of study participants. If I used another type of methodology, I would not be able to capture such data. I did not choose phenomenology because a phenomenological approach would not allow me to understand the central phenomenon of perspective on parent engagement. This is because phenomenology focuses on the nature and meaning of everyday or significant experiences (Butler-Kisber, 2010; Vagle, 2014; Wertz et al., 2011). A case study would also not be appropriate because a case study focuses on an in-depth study and analysis of a single unit (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). In this basic qualitative study with interviews, participants' responses are based on their perspectives of benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for increasing parent engagement that were developed as a result of working for at least three years in a rural Title I charter school.

Participants

Population

According to Creswell (2012), the researcher will understand the central phenomenon from qualitative research based on the individual or location chosen to conduct the study. Twelve participants, comprised of two administrators, two parent liaisons, and eight early childhood teachers from grades K-3, were asked to volunteer for the study. Selection of participants included the criteria that each participant chosen is an educator affiliated with one of two charter school sites where I conducted the study. Participants had three or more years of experience as educators serving K-3 students as a principal, or parent liaison, or teacher. Based on purposeful sampling, as outlined by Creswell (2017), I located sites and recruited study participants for this basic qualitative study with interviews. According to Mason (2010), using 12 participants is standard and efficient enough to fulfill the purpose of a basic qualitative study with interviews. Having 12 participants allowed me the ability to gain depth of inquiry regarding participants' perspectives. From a pool of 20 certified educators, comprised of four administrators, 13 teachers, and three parent liaisons, only 12 educators responded and participated. Using purposeful sampling, I invited educators from two rural Title I charter schools who had three or more years of experience as educators serving K-3 students as a principal, parent liaison, or teacher.

Procedures for Gaining Access

In order to conduct this study, I followed precise procedures. First, I received permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University. My Walden

University's approval number for this study is 03-02-2020-0745036. After IRB approval, I contacted two Title I charter schools' district administrators via a letter, followed by a phone call, to seek administrators' approvals to conduct this basic qualitative study with interviews on their primary or elementary campus. Once I received each schools' approval, I recruited educators within the both schools to participate in the study. To do so, my original plan was to contact the principals and requesting permission to distribute flyers in the school. The flyers described the study, provided criteria for selection of participants, and gave my e-mail contact information. With each principal's approval, due to the COVID-19 virus, documents were emailed to the participants. Potential participants had my contact information and could chose to contact me by e-mail. After receiving e-mails from potential participants, I contacted volunteers by follow-up e-mail to answer any questions volunteers may have. I also sent each participant a letter of informed consent that included information describing the study, my research purpose, the potential risks of the study, and an overview of the information I sought from each participant. Volunteers for this study were asked to e-mail the statement, "I consent to participate in the study," to patricia.burns@waldenu.edu within five days of receiving their invitations. I made sure that each participant understood that all responses were confidential and could be digitally sent via email. Once returned, the digital file was stored on a password protected computer that is maintained in my home office where only I have access to interview data. Finally, each participant read and reviewed summaries of his or her interview responses to interview questions. Each participant was able to correct any discrepancies, add to interview responses, and return them via email.

On average, it took each participant between 10 to 15 minutes to read the summary of his/her interview and approximately five minutes to acknowledge the accuracy of the summary via e-mail. Confirmation or corrections were sent to patricia.burns@waldenu.edu within five days of receiving the interview summary.

Establishing Researcher/Participant Relationships

As a rural Title I charter school teacher myself, I was able to build rapport with study participants. Through email, I introduced myself and thanked each participant prior to conducting the semistructured interview. Each participant responded and I asked each participant if he or she had any questions and reminded him or her that their participation was voluntary and he or she may exit the study at any time. I reviewed all the parts of the informed consent form, asked volunteers if they had questions, and answered their questions. After I begin with the interviews, I used alpha-numeric codes A1 and A2 to code the administrators' papers; T1, T2...T8 to code teachers' papers; and PL1 and PL2 to code parent liaisons' papers. Using alpha-numeric codes on each educators' interview protocol forms allowed me to conceal the participants' identities. Each interview was emailed and recorded electronically. At the end of each interview, each participant could ask any questions about the study and may offer other inputs as it relates to the study. After each interview was completed, I read the interview multiple times. I reviewed notes I took during or immediately after reading each interview. I continued the process of reading each interview transcript for accuracy and contained all utterances of the participant. Following collection of interview data, I manually organized and coded each

of the participants' responses in a Microsoft file digitally in a computer with a protected password that only I have access to.

The interview protocol was based on three guiding research questions. The six in-depth semistructured interview questions were designed to gather educators' perspectives of benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for increasing parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools serving K-3 students. I followed-up with prompts as needed via e-mail to more deeply involve educators in providing their perspectives. The interview questions reflected the conceptual framework of Epstein's (1995) model of *Six Types of Parent Involvement*. The six in-depth semistructured interview questions were adapted from questionnaire items of the Epstein and Salinas (1993) Questionnaire for Teachers and Parents in the Elementary and Middle Grades. I reviewed and received insight from using the questionnaire to ensure that the research questions were aligned with the conceptual framework. I manually organized and coded data from the interviews in this study.

Ethical Protection of Human Subjects

As of August 2019, I was able to complete the CITI training as a student – researcher. CITI training provided a review of my ethical responsibilities when conducting research. Measures were taken for the protection of participants' rights. Digitally, online email interviews, transcripts from interviews, and summaries of the interviews, and any responses to transcript summaries made by participants through e-mail, were maintained in a password protected laptop that only I have access to maintain confidentiality. Data in the form of hard-copy materials were locked in a file cabinet in my home office throughout the whole process and only I had access to the file cabinet

key. After five years, all the data and audio recordings gathered during this research will be destroyed by file deletion and shredding to protect participants' identity.

Data Collection

Interviews were the main source of data in this basic qualitative study. The documents that the participants received and held are consent forms and recruitment flyers. Data collection took place through emails with 12 rural Title I charter school educators (2 administrators, 2 parent liaisons, and 8 teachers). Digitally audio recorded interviews were replaced with emails due to the Walden University's IRB approving alternative data collection formats considering the COVID-19 virus. Due to the intention of gaining educators' perspectives on benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for increasing parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools serving K-3 students, the *Six Types of Parent Involvement* model by Epstein (1995) was used as the framework for this study. Interview questions are aligned with the three research questions of this study. Collection of interview data were appropriate for the basic qualitative study with interviews tradition.

I followed an interview protocol for this study. Data collection instruments included a reflective journal for notes I took during interviews. The tools used for data collection are online emails and my laptop computer. The online emails were used to record participants' responses to interview questions, was enough for data collection to answer the research questions of this study.

The interview protocol, which contained the interview questions, was designed by me and followed the conceptual framework of this study. In preparation for development

of the interview protocol, I contacted the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships by phone to receive Dr. Joyce Epstein's permission to review the Epstein and Salinas (1993) *Questionnaire for Teachers and Parents in the Elementary and Middle Grades*, which contains elements of Epstein's original model, for creating interview questions. The interview protocol was guided by the conceptual framework. The Epstein and Salinas (1993) Questionnaire was referred to as a reference. After I designed the interview questions, I consulted an expert for his input to validate the interview questions. An expert in Title I Charter School administration and parent and community engagement reviewed the interview questions for this study in a face-to-face meeting with me to provide his input and suggestions. The expert confirmed that the interview questions did align with the research questions and were valid in obtaining participants' perspectives (District Administrator, personal communication, January 5, 2019).

First, I received permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University. My Walden University's approval number for this study was **03-02-2020-0745036**. After IRB approval, I contacted both Title I charter schools' district administrators via letter followed by a phone call to seek each administrators' approvals to conduct this basic qualitative study with interviews with building-level administrators, teachers, and parent liaisons. Once I receive each schools district administrator's approval, I recruited the educators who are affiliated with each charter school. After recruiting, I identified participants based on the criteria of this study. I began by contacting principals and requesting permission to distribute flyers in their school. The

flyers described the study, provided criteria for selection of participants, and gave my e-mail contact information. Each participant received information that included a description of the study I was conducting, my research purpose, and an overview of the information I will seek from the participants. As I receive emails with interested volunteers back, volunteers for this study were asked to e-mail the statement "I consent to participate in the study," to patricia.burns@waldenu.edu within five days of receiving this invitation. It is my assumption that the self-reported interested via email was correct. I arranged interviews via email due to alternative data collection formats being added in light of the COVID-19 virus. I reviewed the informed consent document and had the participant sign. I also informed the participant that he or she may exit the study at any time. Further, I reinforced that her or his confidentiality is a priority.

Next step to conducting this study, I emailed interview questions to participants that met the study's criteria. For the interviewing process, I used emails, a reflective journal, and password protected computer. Interviews were conducted via emails. I used a reflective journal for notetaking once I received interview responses back from participants. An interview protocol was created to guide my interview process from the beginning to the end. The interview protocol included the script, the research study purpose, interview questions, and information letting the participants know they can exit the study at any time. The script's information was used to inform participants of their rights to participate in this research if they chose to do so. Interviews were recorded electronically through email verbatim by the participant's responses. Member checking was used to allow participants to check for accuracy and provide their feedback.

Participants read and reviewed their interview responses to the interview questions, correct any discrepancies, add to their interview responses, and return their responses via email.

The final step to conducting this study, I had to code and transcribe interview data, maintain a reflective journal with notes, and check for interpretations. Once the interview responses were emailed electronically to me, then I transcribed the interview responses. Participants' transcripts were reviewed and corrected prior to their return by the participants to ensure I could capture their responses accurately. A Microsoft file was digitally created and kept records of all data collected. The interview data were collected from 12 educators (2 administrators, 8 teachers, and 2 parent liaisons), then compiled manually to support the data analysis process.

After IRB approval, I contacted two Title I charter schools' district administrators via a letter, followed by a phone call, to seek administrators' approvals to conduct this basic qualitative study with interviews on their primary or elementary campus. Once I received each schools' approval, I recruited educators within the both schools to participate in the study. To do so, my original plan was to contact the principals and requesting permission to distribute flyers in the school. The flyers described the study, provided criteria for selection of participants, and gave my e-mail contact information. With each principal's approval, due to the COVID-19 virus, documents were emailed to the participants. Potential participants had my contact information and could chose to contact me by e-mail. After receiving e-mails from potential participants, I contacted volunteers by follow-up e-mail to request that they read the consent form. I also sent each

participant a letter of informed consent that included information describing the study, my research purpose, the potential risks of the study, and an overview of the information I sought from each participant. Volunteers for this study were asked to e-mail the statement, "I consent to participate in the study," to patricia.burns@waldenu.edu within five days of receiving this invitation.

Role of the Researcher

In the role of the researcher, I have a total of 18 years of experience working with students in K-12. Of those 18 years, I have 12 years of teaching experience in the field of early childhood education. I am currently employed in a rural Title I charter school in a Southeastern state in the U.S. For fifteen of those years, I was employed in a neighboring county, where served as an early childhood educator, mentor teacher, science coach, and union representative for educators. In that county, I built a rapport with a plethora of students, parents, educators, administrators, and other educational stakeholders in the community. For the last four years, I have been employed in another neighboring county and am currently serving as a Dual Enrollment and Virtual/Credit Recovery Coordinator, U.S. History teacher, and Afterschool Director. I am a lifelong educator and teacher-leader, who has an appreciation of educator's perspectives of parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools in this area. I did not interview people over whom I have had supervisory authority, people in my current school, or people from my former school. I only interviewed K-3 grade teachers in two rural Title I charter schools where I was not employed, and K-3 teachers who I did not know. I feel positively toward rural Title I charter schools. I maintained a journal of reflections rather than share my thoughts with

study participants. I remained objective while conducting interviews. I did not discuss my experiences of parent engagement during the interviews with my participants, nor at any time during this research process. Questions were developed and validated in advance, so they are nonbiased. I closely followed the interview protocol and did not deviate from it to remain objective. I refrained from bringing my preconceived experiences about parent engagement into this study and maintained subjectivity and objectivity.

Data Analysis

In reporting about the design of the study, this section includes how and when data were analyzed. I have pursued ways to demonstrate evidence of quality and procedures to assure accuracy and credibility of findings. Saldaña (2016) suggested a three-step protocol to ensure credibility: (1) initially code while transcribing interview data; (2) maintain a reflective journal of the research project with copious memos; and (3) check interpretations developed with the participants themselves. I followed each of these recommendations. Further, to clarify validity of interview questions, I had a consultation with an expert reviewer to verify the validity of my research questions.

As each interview was completed, I read over the interview multiple times. I reviewed notes I took while reading each interview. Following collection of interview data via e-mail, I manually organized and coded each of the participants' responses in a Microsoft file digitally in a computer with a protected password that only I have access to. Transcripts from the digitally audio-recorded interviews were analyzed using a priori coding, followed by open coding, and then axial coding (see Saldaña, 2016). A priori coding is based on my conceptual framework, specifically "parenting, communicating,

volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community” (Epstein, 1995, p. 16). These single words or phrases represented the categories found in the literature. For each interview question, I used a priori coding and noted each participant's response that aligned with the codes. I read through all interview transcripts several times and recorded memos in a journal on the participants' responses. I read through the participants' interview transcripts several times to make sure that I was not missing any data relevant to my study. I used alpha-numeric codes to label each participants' responses to conceal participants' identities. The second step I followed was open coding. I read transcripts many times and highlighted codes that emerge on the transcripts. During the open coding process, I wrote copious notes in my reflective journal. I recorded codes that emerge and jotted down participants' quotes in memos in my journal during open coding. Finally, I used axial coding to identify the relationships among data collected from each of the interview questions with a prior, open codes, and emerging themes. “During axial coding, categories are related to subcategories and the properties and dimensions of a category are specified” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 218). Categories were developed by grouping codes that were generated during a priori and open coding. I used and defined participants' data based on different categories and sub-categories identified during axial coding. Member checking also was completed at the end of the participants' interview to check for accuracy with each participant. Member checking is an important technique that qualitative researchers use to establish credibility (Creswell, 2017).

All data collected in this basic qualitative study was reported accurately to ensure credibility, including discrepant data. I included all data gathered during the data analysis process to present in-depth information. To ensure that the data collected in my study were credible, I used the method of triangulation. Triangulation of each participants' interview data (administrators, parent liaisons, and teachers from two rural Title I schools) resulted in adding credibility and trustworthiness to the data. Furthermore, triangulation of data was conducted. The technique is used to confirm suggested findings, but it can also be used to determine the completeness of data (Heale & Forbes, 2013). The evidence of quality was related to the trustworthiness of the electronically recorded data and work in addition to the dependability of this process. In this study, it was vital to accurately collect and analyzed data. Electronic documents were collected to support the alignment of participants' interview responses. Data collected in semistructured interviews were examined to confirm the accuracy and quality of this study. To ensure the dependability of this basic qualitative study with interviews, a step-by-step process was used to gather, collect, and analyze data. To ensure there were not any discrepancies found in this project study, the following procedures were taken to deal with discrepant cases. Each participant was asked to read and review their interview responses to the interview questions, correct any discrepancies, add to their interview responses as needed, and return them via email. All data collected in this basic qualitative study were reported accurately to ensure credibility. According to Maxwell (2013) reporting discrepant data from participants' perspectives yields a deeper understanding of findings from the study; however, no discrepant cases were found.

Limitations

In this basic qualitative study with interviews there were 12 participants comprised of 2 administrators, 2 parent liaisons, and 8 early childhood teachers from grades K-3. Limitations that can affect the study were the sample size, location, and population. The sample study size may seem relatively small, but the results were represented by these participants only. According to Mason (2010), using 12 participants is normal and efficient enough to fulfill the purpose of this basic qualitative study with interviews. There may be limited access to participants to investigate the research. Another limitation may be limited access due to a small geographic location or population. Educators at the two rural Title I charter schools were the participants of this study, nevertheless other schools can learn from the findings in this study. The two sites were selected because of their uniquenesses in that they are both rural Title I charter schools. Another limitation is based on the fact that the accuracy of the data collected is dependent upon self-reported data. The local school that prompted this investigation was a rural Title I charter school serving K-3 students where parent engagement was reported as low. Educators who review this study will need to understand the individuality of this study and consider how findings may be applied to their own settings.

Data Analysis Results

Data Generated, Gathered, and Electronically Recorded

Data analysis results were generated, gathered, analyzed, and electronically recorded. The study was conducted in two rural Title I charter schools. The data were generated from educators who served students in grades K-3. Each educator was

affiliated with one of two charter schools' sites where I conducted this study. Each educator had more than three or more years of experience as a principal, or parent liaison, or teacher. My findings were built based on the research questions in this basic qualitative study with interviews. The participants' interview responses were generated, gathered, electronically recorded, and analyzed based on the conceptual framework that framed the study.

Data gathered in this basic qualitative study came from semistructured interviews electronically conducted through email. Due to COVID-19, interviews were conducted base on the participants' availability to complete the interview questions electronically. The forms of data gathered were interview responses and email attachments consenting to participant in the study. The data recorded electronically were assigned alpha-numeric codes to conceal the participants' identities. Data were analyzed immediately after each interview response were received back via email.

Themes

As the participants' responses were combined from the 12 interview responses, themes for this project study emerged from participants' interview responses during the data collection process. Participants' responses revealed four patterns-themes in this study: (a) educators believed there were benefits of parent engagement; (b) educators believed there were barriers of parent engagement; (c) educators believed there are strategies that increase parent engagement, and (d) educators believed that responses to the pandemic created new avenues for parent and teacher engagement.

Theme 1: Educators believed there were benefits of parent engagement.

After conducting online interviews with 12 educators (2 administrators, 8 teachers, 2 parent liaisons), educators shared their perspectives on the benefits of parent engagement in a rural Title I charter school. Each participant shared what their perspectives were for RQ1, which addressed benefits of parent engagement. Parents identified that educators believed that the benefits of parent engagement can be summarized into subthemes of students receiving a good education and students achieving academic success. Educators shared that parents liked getting first-hand information about what students are learning at school and gaining a clearer understanding of the roles of administrators, parent liaisons, and teachers. Teachers also included several other benefits, as follows: understanding of parents' expectations; recognizing enhanced student learning with students gaining a more positive view of themselves (believing in self, feeling loved, and having confidence); recognizing benefits of partnerships to prepare students for a lifetime of experiences that would help them function in today's community; having students come to school prepared to learn; finding parents support the mission of the school by helping in the classroom and supporting school activities. In regards to the benefits some educators recognized as coming from the community of learners that developed as a result of the pandemic, parents provided support for students at home by partnering with teachers and co-teaching with teachers. A few educators mentioned this community of learners restored parents' confidence in their child's education. Responses to RQ1 revealed patterns of student success, positive behaviors, improved academic performance, consistent school attendance and time-on-task, and support for students at home and school.

RQ1 identified that educators believed these are the benefits:

- **Student** - good education, student success, high levels of social skills, students tend to behave better and achieve higher academically
- **Families** - parents getting first-hand of what students are learning at school, clear understanding of our role as an educator, help in the classroom and with school activities, support at home and school, supports the mission of the school, students come to school prepared to learn, lowering absenteeism
- **Teacher** - parent expectations, boost confidence in students
- **School** - enhancement in student learning in a more positive view (belief of self, loved, and confidence), foster relationships between parents and educators, and a feeling of community at the school's site, restores the parent's confidence in their child's education
- **Community** - prepares students for a lifetime experience that would help them function in today's community

The first overlaying sub-theme of benefits of parent engagement was student success. Educators believed the one benefit of parent engagement is student success. A2 stated, "Having a close-knit school community allows for the trifecta of student success (home, school, student) to be consistently involved, increasing the chances of a student's academic success." T1 stated, "the benefit to the teacher is teachers have an open communication with parents who can assist in the student's success from being informed on the skills and standards that are taught at school and that can be reinforced at home."

Educators believed the second benefit of parent engagement was better behavior and attendance. T2 stated, “With parents being involved and visible it cuts down on the behavior issues. Better school attendance and homework completion rates.” T3 stated, “In other words, when there is a relationship with the teacher and parents, students often tend to make more of a positive effort in classwork and behavior.” T6 stated, “When parents are involved in their child’s learning process, students tend to behave better and achieve higher academically. Various benefits of parent engagement include, better school attendance, completion of homework assignments, students have higher self-esteem, higher grades and test scores, and less behavior problems.” T8 stated, “The benefits of parent engagement lead to a child having better academics and the child also will have a high level of social skills.”

Educators believed the third benefit of parent engagement was support at home and school. T5 stated, “Benefits to students...students see education as important. Students get help at home. Students are supported with school activities. Benefits to teachers - Teachers are supported with homework and a behavior plan.” T7 stated, “Benefits of parent engagement for a teacher would be help in the classroom, support at home, and a feeling of community at the school’s site.”

Four of the eight teachers chose sub-themes, as follows: better behaviors, improved academics, and school attendance were benefits. felt this as a great benefit of parent engagement. One administrator and one teacher felt another benefit of parent engagement was student success. Two teachers felt support at home and school was also a benefit of parent engagement. Two of the participants mentioned student success as a

benefit of parent engagement. Considering the conceptual framework from Epstein (1995) and Epstein et al. (2009) with a focus on the six types of parent involvement, Theme 1 allowed parents to parent, communicate with educators, volunteer in their child's school or classroom, learn at home with their child, make decisions that are beneficial to their children, and collaborate with the community.

Theme 2: Educators believed there were barriers to parent engagement.

Each participant shared their perspectives for RQ2, which asked about educators' perspectives of barriers to parent engagement. Educators believed that there are barriers to parent engagement that include the following: transportation, lack of communication, parents' educational level, parents with more than one job, limited resources at home (Internet or any type of devices such as computer or iPad), English language proficiency, absence of a relationship with the children's school personnel, and poverty. Interview responses from RQ2 revealed sub-themes of transportation, parents' level of education, parents with multiple jobs, parents' limited or lack of resources, and families living at or below the Federal Poverty Guidelines for family poverty levels (FPL).

Educators believed the first sub-theme that was seen as a barrier to parent engagement was lack of transportation. T2 stated, "Some of the barriers that I see that we face here are limited transportation also limited education. They are unable to help their own child with homework, due to lack of transportation and education on their part." T4 stated that, "Some of the barriers to parent engagement is lack of transportation. lack of understanding the purpose, no relationship with school personnel, and different language barriers. These are hindrances to parent involvement." T5 stated, "Barriers to parent

engagement are poverty, fear of school because the parents did not do well in school, lack of transportation to attend school meetings and functions, uneducated parents that can't help students at home, and parents that are working shift work or more than one job and can't help kids at home or come to school functions." T6 stated, "Barriers may include a lack of understanding, limited resources (computer, internet, Wi-Fi), no transportation, and work schedules." T8 stated, "Barriers are due to the long work hours, not having transportation or reliable transportation, as well as limited to no education. All these barriers results in parents not being involved. PL1 stated, "Having identified these barriers, there has been a plan put into place to make information more accessible to parents who do not have internet access or adequate transportation to get to the school by any means necessary." PL2 also stated, "Parent engagement through volunteering is also a challenge because several of the parents do not have reliable transportation."

Educators believed the second sub-theme was a barrier to parent engagement was the parent's education. A2 stated, "Barriers to parent engagement include a lack of ability to communicate (i.e. lack of internet, no cell phones), lack of emphasis on education (especially in communities where many parents did not graduate from High School), and lack of literacy (a perceived inability to assist based on personal education level)." T2 stated, "Some of the barriers that we face here are limited transportation also limited education." T3 stated, "The barriers are the parents' own educational level." T4 stated, "The barriers that I perceive that prevent parent involvement are the lack of transportation, language barriers, lack of relationship building with the staff, the parents lack of education to assist their child, cultural differences, and safety issues in the area

after school hours.” T8 stated, “Limited to no education results in parents not being involved.” PL1 stated, “Lack of parent education to help with schoolwork.”

Educators believed the third sub-theme was the parents with multiple jobs. A1 stated, “I have seen parents with two jobs still support their children, but sometimes students don’t understand that mom/dad can’t be there because they are working to support you and your siblings.” T5 stated, “Parents that are working shift work or more than one job and can't help kids at home or come to school functions.” T7 stated, “Parents may work more than one job and have hours that prohibit them from being able to come to the school and volunteer.”

Educators believed the fourth sub-theme was limited resources at home. T6 stated, “Barriers may include a lack of understanding, limited resources (computer, internet, Wi-Fi), no transportation, and work schedules.” PL1 also stated, “The identified barriers to parent engagement for a rural Title I charter school are poverty, lack of access, lack of financial resources, and lack of awareness.”

Educators believed the last sub-theme that educators’ felt was a barrier to engagement was poverty. T5 stated, “Due to poverty, students are not always in a stable home (housing changes are frequent, and they may be living with various relatives or friends). Parents are overwhelmed with personal issues and can't be engaged at school.” PL1 stated, “The identified barriers to parent engagement for a rural Title I charter school are poverty, lack of access, lack of financial resources, and lack of awareness.”

Seven out of the 12 educators felt the biggest barrier of parent engagement was transportation. Six out of the 12 educators felt another big barrier of parent engagement

was the parent's education. Three out of the 12 educators believed that a barrier of parent engagement was parents with multiple jobs. Two out of the 12 educators believed that another barrier of parent engagement was limited or lack of resources. Two out of the 12 educators believed that another barrier of parent engagement was poverty. Considering the conceptual framework from Epstein (1995) and Epstein et al. (2009) and focus on the Six Types of Parent Involvement, Theme 2 allowed parents to parent, communicate, volunteer, learn at home, make decisions, and collaborate with the community but some barriers kept them from being a part of their children's education at one time or another.

Theme 3: Educators believed that strategies increased parent engagement

Each participant shared their perspectives by addressing interview questions aligned with RQ3, which addressed strategies that increase parent engagement? Some participants mentioned that organizations involving families attracted parents who want to be involved in leadership and decision-making such as Parents and Teachers Association and School Advisory Council. Participants identified that educators believed that the strategies that increase parent engagement are celebrations that include opportunities that do not conflict with the workday, incentives for parents who participate, and opportunities for interaction with familiar groups of people. Other strategies included using social media, online communication (ClassDojo), volunteering programs, family nights, school personnel continually communicating with parents (through letters, text, and phone calls), using multimedia outlets (website, apps, text messaging, email, Facebook, Instagram), online advice, blogs, and online calendars. Educators recognized that there was increased participation when the school provided

dinner and/or food events, parent workshops, transportation, in-home visits, entertainment, parents invited to eat lunch with their children, and parent/teacher conferences. RQ3 sub-themes were use of social media, offer of food, SAC/PTA/PTO, volunteering, parent/teacher conferences, home visits, and family night.

Educators believed the first strategy that increases parent engagement is the use of social media. A2 stated, "I'd like to use Social Media a bit more as a means of parent engagement. We seem to have more success when we 'meet people where they are.' There are very few parents, regardless of background, gender, or first language, who are not using a social media platform. Even more so than emails, the use of social media would be likely to draw parents in and create an environment of bi-directional interaction for our school." T5 stated, "Social media is a strategy that parents seem to like - using social media." T7 stated, "Some strategies to increase parent engagement for a teacher would be the use of parent buy in and the various uses of multimedia outlets (website, apps, text messaging, email, Facebook, Instagram)." PL1 stated, "Some innovative ways to fuel parental involvement, which we included into our curriculum and have seen results, are the following: online advice videos, a dedicated blog and online calendar, social media to connect to our parents, home visits and parent/teacher conferences, monthly family nights and mass volunteer opportunities."

Educators believed the second strategy that increase parent engagement was to offer food/dinner. T1 stated, "One strategy that we came up with to increase getting them in at the school is having parents come out and offer dinner to parents and families so that they can learn while enjoying a hot meal." T2 stated, "Transportation and food should be

provided and they will come.” T3 stated, “As Band Director, my strategies are simple -- use entertainment and food. Through the entertainment of their child and the additional reward of being fed, they will more than likely be more willing to participate in for school events such as parent-teacher organization and a bit more involvement in their student success.” T8 stated, “I recommend community events that provide school supplies, food, and books for students and parent workshops (finances, neighborhood resources that are available, childcare, tutoring for parents, etc.).”

Educators believed the third strategy that increase parent engagement was to continue having SAC/PTA/PTO. A1 stated, “We continue to have SAC meetings and improve our PTA involvement. Our community is starting to respond and support our growth.” T4 stated, “Open houses, PTO, SAC to continue inviting parents in the hopes of attendance.” T6 stated, “One way I try to encourage parents to volunteer is by making a contest of it. For example, for PTA or SAC meetings, I give prizes to the students who have the most participants show up.”

Educators believed the fourth strategy that increase parent engagement was offering volunteering. T4 stated, “Volunteering programs could increase engagement.” T7 stated, “One example to help encourage volunteering at the school and in the classroom.” PL1 stated, “A dedicated blog and online calendar, using social media at your school to connect to our parents, home visits and parent/teacher conferences, monthly family nights and mass volunteer opportunities.” PL2 stated, “We will continue using the strategies of home visits, sending home daily calendars, making phone calls, and also offering times when parents can come in to volunteer.”

Educators believed the fifth strategy that increase parent engagement was parent/teacher conferences. T5 stated, “Using social media. Family nights. Parent /teacher conferences.” T8 stated, “I plan on using reading and math literacy nights along with parent conferences to help get parents more engaged and involved in the school.” PL1 stated, “Online advice videos, A dedicated blog and online calendar, using social media at your school to connect to our parents, home visits and parent/teacher conferences, monthly family nights and mass volunteer opportunities.”

Educators believed the sixth strategy that increase parent engagement was doing home visits. T2 stated, “Providing in home visits to help parents with questions they may have pertaining to the curriculum and recommending that transportation be provided to parents for any afterschool activities that involve their child.” PL1 stated, “Some innovative ways to fuel parental involvement include which we included into our curriculum and have seen results are the following: Online advice videos, A dedicated blog and online calendar, using social media at your school to connect to our parents, home visits and parent/teacher conferences, monthly family nights and mass volunteer opportunities.” PL2 stated, “We will continue using the strategies of home visits, sending home daily calendars, making phone calls, and also offering times when parents can come in to volunteer.” Educators believed the last strategy that increase parent engagement was having family nights. T5 stated, “Using social media. Family nights. Parent /teacher conferences.” PL1 stated, “Have monthly family nights.”

Four of the seven overlaying sub-themes (social media/multimedia outlets, offer dinner/food, volunteering, and home visits) were chosen by four out of the 12 educators

as a strategy that can continue to increase parent engagement. Three out of the 12 educators felt SAC/PTO/PTA, parent/teacher conferences, and home visits was another strategy that can continue to increase parent engagement. Two out of the 12 educators felt family was another strategy that can continue to increase parent engagement. Considering the conceptual framework from Epstein (1995) and Epstein et al. (2009) and focus on the six types of parent involvement, Theme 3 allowed more opportunities for parents to parent, communicate with educators, volunteer with the school at home through online learning, learn at home, make decisions, and collaborate with the community.

Theme 4: Educators believed that the response to the pandemic created new avenues for parent and teacher engagement

Several educators shared their perspectives about benefits and strategies that were a result of parent and teacher partnerships that formed as a result of responses to COVID-19. Educators believed that the response to the pandemic created new avenues for parent and teacher engagement. This avenue identified that educators believed that the sub-themes of a community of practice and co-teaching. Educators found that as a result of the new ways of engaging that emerged as a result of the pandemic, and the length of time involved, that they engaged in co-teaching with parents. Teachers and parents worked together as a community of practice to support students.

T4 stated, “During this pandemic, parents and educators are building better relationships to enhance learning in the homes. I think some parents are scared and are unsure of how to really help their child. This is a stressful time for both teachers and parents because some teachers are unable to use technology effectively because of their

lack of technology skills. Whereas, some parents don't have the technology that is needed to engage through online learning. Then, there are other parents who are proficient with technology. I think parents and teachers are supporting each other by co-teaching. Parents are calling teachers and teachers are calling parents for assistance one way or another to better help with student learning at home. Social media use has increased parent involvement because most parents have an outlet in the media world. This vehicle is a great tool to engage parents in receiving information to help their child at home. It strengthens this partnership. I think this pandemic forced the community to practice related to learning through technology in a different light."

A1 stated, "Parents are parenting. Some of them are using parenting skills they hadn't used as much and many of them are using new parenting skills. Parents feel supported by teachers. Assisting in your child's education has and will always be an expectation of parents by educators. Using social media has increased parental participation. Due to the distance learning, parents have received more information on what the class expectations are and have had to be more involved with motivating learners and helping them comprehend in new ways. Parents are children's first and most important teachers and they are now co-teaching. Communication, or in many cases has become forced and increased communication, which are the avenues society has observed that has increased parental engagement. The pandemic has made us aware of skills in technology. That has made us learn and use skills that we wouldn't normally have used. These skills and technology have always been here, and we knew it was beneficial, but we are now thrust into using it and will figure out how to use it more effectively and

efficiently in the future. What we can gather off this is a reaction to the Digital Divide. The digital divide should not result in finger pointing but in addressing the divides. There are divides in the availability of technology, the practice of technology and the resources in technology. Partner that with the existing divides in education and we are now made aware of the real challenges. Perhaps we won't be as standard driven and be more student driven.”

T8 stated, “Covid-19 has robbed our youths' overall school experience. Students are missing their friends, graduation, and social and emotional growth. To a certain degree, I think some parents and several teachers are supporting students and others during this unprecedented event in new ways. There is increased empathy for the roles that each play -- teachers and parents.”

Educators expressed words that described teachers and parents having become a community of practice in the areas of technology. Responses to the pandemic have allowed parents and teachers to build a community and be responsive to each other through different kinds of technology. This new avenue has also allowed educators and parents to support each other. It also gives educators a chance to receive heroic awards for parents and teachers considering the COVID-19 virus. Considering the conceptual framework from Epstein (1995) and Epstein et al. (2009) and focus on the Six Types of Parent Involvement, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Theme 4 has allowed parents to be parents at home, communicate more with educators, provide opportunities to learn at home with their children, make decisions about their child's education, and collaborate

more with the community to help students finish out the current school year (2019-2020 school year).

Table 1 illustrates the frequency of the overlaying sub-themes mentioned by more than one of the 12 participants. A is for administrators, T is for the teachers, and parent liaisons participants. I also used numbers based on the number of administrators, teachers, and parent liaisons that participated in the interviews. I used alpha-numeric codes A1 and A2 to code the administrators' papers; T1, T2...T8 to code teachers' papers; and PL1 and PL2 to code parent liaisons' papers to conceal the participants' identities.

Table 1

Research Questions

Research Questions	Overlapping sub-themes	Participants' Responses: A1.., T1.., PL1..
RQ1: What are rural Title I charter school educators' (administrators, teachers, parent liaison) perspectives of the benefits of parent engagement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Success • Better behavior, academics, school attendance • Support at home and school • Pandemic created new avenues for parent and teacher co-teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A2, T1 • T2, T3, T6, T8 • T5, T7 • T4 • A1, T4, T8

RQ2: What are rural Title I charter school educators' (administrators, teachers, parent liaison) perspectives of the barriers to parent engagement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation • Parent's education • Parents work multiple jobs • Limited or lack of resources • Poverty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T2, T4, T5, T6, T8, PL1, PL2 • A2, T2, T3, T4, T8, PL1 • A1, T5, T7 • T6, PL1 • T5, PL1
RQ3: What are the perspectives of rural Title I charter school educators' (administrators, teachers, parent liaison) of strategies that increase parent engagement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media/multimedia outlets • Offer dinner/food • SAC, PTO/PTA • Volunteering • Parent/Teacher conferences • Home visits • Family night • Technology community of practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A2, T5, T7, PL1 • T1, T2, T3, T8 • A1, T4, T6 • T4, T7, PL1, PL2 • T5, T8, PL1 • T2, PL1, PL2 • T8, PL2 • A1, T4, T8

A = Administrators; T = Teachers; PL = Parent Liaison

The outcomes in relation to the problem and research questions provided an in-depth understanding of the participant's perspectives on parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools. It also addressed the four major themes that the participants of the study shared about their perspectives. It included a PD plan from the literature that may strengthen gap in the research on practice by exploring rural Title I charter school educators' perspectives on benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for increasing parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools serving K-3 students. The focus was on benefits, barriers, and strategies.

In my project deliverables and findings, the participants provided their individual perspectives and experiences that allowed me to identify four common themes. Educators

believed that student success, better behavior, academics, school attendance, and support at home and school are the benefits of parent engagement in rural Title charter schools. Educators commonly believed that transportation, parent's education, parents work multiple job, limited or lack of resources, and poverty are the barriers in rural Title charter schools. Educators believed that using social media/multi media outlets, offering dinner/food, continuing to have SAC, PTO/PTA, allowing parents opportunities to volunteer, continue having parent/teacher conferences, and doing home visits and family nights are strategies that can increase parent engagement in rural Title charter schools. Educators believed that the response to the pandemic created new avenues for parent and teacher engagement through coteaching as a community of practice. Even though the interviews were via email considering the COVID-19 virus, the participants were able to explore, reflect, as well as edit their thoughts thoroughly to share the importance of parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools.

The four themes that were identified in this study revealed educators' perspectives of benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for increasing parent engagement to allow me to be able to create a professional development (PD) training for educators in rural Title charter schools serving K-3 students. The themes identified in this study connected me to research literature that supported the four identified pattern-themes and presented to current and future educators. The method of presentation will be a 2-day PD on the school campus. The PD will include information from the current literature review that will highlight educators' perspectives related to the themes identified in this study on

benefits of, benefits of, and strategies for increasing parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools serving K-3 students.

Section 3: The Project

In this section, I focus on a PD plan created for this project study. Data for this project study were gathered from 12 educators from two rural Title 1 charter schools where parent engagement was reported to be low. Participants in this basic qualitative study with interviews shared their perspectives on the benefits of parent engagement, barriers to parent engagement, and strategies to increase parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools located in the Southeastern U.S. From the approved genre of possible projects, I chose to develop a Professional Development Plan. The PD plan was selected

as the project best suited for the findings in this study. The semistructured interviews and data collected from the participants in this study revealed four themes:

- Educators believed that student success, better behavior, academics, school attendance, and support at home and school were benefits of parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools.
- Educators believed that transportation, parents' education, parents working multiple jobs, limited or lack of resources, and poverty were barriers in rural Title I charter schools.
- Educators believed that using social media/multimedia outlets, offering dinner/food, continuing to have SAC, PTO/PTA, allowing parents opportunities to volunteer, continuing to have parent/teacher conferences, and doing home visits and family nights were strategies that could increase parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools.
- Educators believed that the pandemic created new avenues for parent and teacher engagement with co-teaching through a community of practice.

This PD plan was designed for and directed toward current and future educators at a rural Title I charter school in the Southeastern US. The primary goal of the project study was to provide educators with information based on findings from a qualitative study exploring parent engagement in a rural Title I charter school serving K-3 students; and to provide PD on current content acquired from a review of the literature from the last five years. The goals of the PD follows the purpose of the qualitative study: to

explore educators' perspectives on benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for increasing parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools serving K-3 students.

Rationale

The problem that prompted this project study was a low level of parent engagement in the local rural Title I charter school and administrators' and parent liaisons' wishes to gain knowledge about educators' perspectives on benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for increasing parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools serving K-3 students. Findings from the study suggested that educators need information and support to increase parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools. To prepare educators in rural Title I charter schools to increase parent engagement, the PD plan includes findings from literature and strategies and activities for engagement. I chose development of a PD plan as my basic project genre because it is a research-based, effective way to boost educational systems (see Pharis, Wu, Sullivan, & Moore, 2019). Increasing parent engagement is an important goal with benefits to all stakeholders in the rural Title I charter school.

Review of the Literature

A scholarly literature review related to development of a PD plan was conducted. This review of the literature provided research that supported this project study. Four themes identified in the project study guided this review of the literature. This review of literature provided research based evidence of benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools. I reviewed peer-reviewed articles selected from the Walden University Library, Google Scholar, ERIC, ProQuest, SAGE,

and PsycINFO Online research databases. Keywords and phrases used in the literature search were *professional development*, *professional development for educators*, *professional development designs*, *benefits of professional developments*, *professional development on parent engagement*, *professional development and educators*, *professional development and administrators*, *professional development and teachers*, *professional development and parent liaison*, *coteaching*, and *communities of practice*. In preparation, I met online with the Walden EdD librarian to learn more about how to explore and choose databases to broaden my search. In addition, I attended the Education Research Skills for the Doctoral Capstone webinar. I applied selection criteria in my literature search in order to focus on peer-reviewed works that had been published within the last five years. Researchers revealed that there is no universal agreement on what parental engagement is; it can take many forms. However, this review of literature allowed me to link the four themes of this study with the research topics as follows:

1. Educators believed that student success, better behavior, academics, school attendance, and support at home and school were benefits of parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools.
2. Educators believed that transportation, parents' education, parents working multiple jobs, limited or lack of resources, and poverty were the barriers to parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools.
3. Educators believed that using social media/multimedia outlets, offering dinner/food, continuing to have SAC, PTO/PTA, allowing parents opportunities to volunteer, continuing to have parent/teacher conferences, and

conducting home visits and holding family nights were strategies that could increase parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools.

4. Educators believed that the response to the pandemic created new avenues for parent and teacher engagement. Educators found that as a result of the new ways of engaging that emerged as a result of the pandemic, and the length of time involved, they engaged in coteaching with parents. Further, educators felt that teachers and parents had become a community of practice in the area of technology.

The review of literature is organized into sections as follow: benefits of parent engagement as perceived by educators, barriers to parent engagement as perceived by educators, strategies that increase parent engagement as perceived by educators, pandemic presenting new avenues for parent and teacher engagement, and professional development. In the benefits section, I included topics such as student success, better behavior, improved academics, school attendance, and support at home and school. In the barriers to section, I included transportation, parents' education, parents work multiple jobs, limited or lack of resources, and poverty. In the strategies section, I included social media/multimedia outlets, offer dinner/food, SAC/PTO/PTA, volunteering, parent/teacher conferences, home visits, and family night. In the new avenues section, I included coteaching and community of practice.

Benefits of Parent Engagement as Perceived by Educators

Student Success

Student success comes from parents encouraging learning at home and being involved in their children's education. As children get older, parents should continue to be involved in children's academic progress (Learning Liftoff, 2017). A parent's role is essential to student success. Researchers have suggested that the most important time for parents to become involved in their children's education is when the children are at the earliest levels of schooling. These early years represent the most opportune time for parents to explore the world with their children through a variety of fun and helpful learning activities (Learning Liftoff, 2017). During children's early childhood years, if parents form a partnership with their children's school, they can build a strong foundation that will lead to student success and future parent engagement opportunities.

Better Behavior, Academics, and School Attendance

Lara and Saracostti (2019) discussed the associations between parental involvement in schools and academic achievement, noting how research has documented the positive influences of parental involvement. Students whose parents are involved with their schoolwork attend school more regularly than those children whose parents are uninvolved (Lara & Saracostti, 2019). Moreover, as children develop over time, research found that students with involved parents have lower rates of substance use and delinquent acts when compared to those children whose parents are uninvolved (Hayakawa, Giovanelli, Englund, & Reynolds, 2015). Hayakawa et al. (2015) found that the associations between parental involvement in schools and academic achievement

revealed three different profiles of parent involvement. These profiles included involvement at home, at school, and through invitations made by their children, their children's teachers, and their schools (Hayakawa et al., 2015). Researchers indicated that there were differences in students' academic achievement scores across different parental involvement profiles. Students with parents who have high and medium levels of involvement had higher academic achievement than those students from families with low parent involvement (Hayakawa et al., 2015). When parents are engaged in their children's education, researchers have found that students have better behavior, academic performance, and school attendance.

Support at Home and School

Consistent parental involvement leads to improved communication and relations between parents and schoolteachers and administrators (Olsen & Fuller, 2017). Olsen and Fuller (2017) discussed evidence based on research involving the positive effects of parental involvement. They described how parental involvement activities that are effectively planned and well implemented can result in significant benefits for children, parents, educators, and the school (Olsen & Fuller, 2017). When parental involvement levels are high, teachers and principals acquired a better understanding of families' cultures and diversity, and they formed deeper respect for parents' abilities and time (Olsen & Fuller, 2017). Support at home and school shows positive effects on parent engagement.

Focusing on the partnership between teachers and parents, Gulevska (2018) identified different elements of engagement, such as the following: communicating with

families about students' success, communicating with families in meetings, and addressing difficult topics with families. For students to be successful academically, they need support at home and school from their parents. Parental involvement consists of two broad patterns: parents' involvement in the life of the school and parents' involvement in support of the child at home (Gulevska, 2018). Parents need to build support for their children at home and at school. Parents' involvement in their children's education from an early age has a significant effect on children's educational achievement (Gulevska, 2018).

Barriers to Parent Engagement as Perceived by Educators

Transportation

Smokowski, Corona, Bacallao, Fortson, Marshall, and Yaros (2018) reviewed problems related to parent engagement, noting structural, attitudinal, and interpersonal barriers specific to recruitment and retention. This article addressed barriers to recruitment and retention in the implementation of parenting programs. It also addressed lessons that were learned for effective program delivery in both rural and urban areas. Structural barriers to parent engagement included instrumental difficulties such as those involved with scheduling appointments, finding transportation, and acquiring appropriate childcare. Attitudinal barriers encompass beliefs about services and providers that may impact engagement, such as perceptions of the relevance and demandingness of the interventions for engagement (Smokowski et al., 2018). According to Smokowski et al. (2018), lack of transportation seems to be a barrier that most parents have perceived as preventing them from engaging in parent involvement.

Factors that may inhibit parents' involvement in their children's school include schedule conflicts, work issues, and transportation barriers (Murray, Finigan-Carr, Jones, Copeland-Linder, Haynie, & Cheng, 2014). Murray et al. (2014) explored barriers to facilitators of school-based parental involvement (SBPI). Findings suggested that parents' motivations for engaging in SBPI may be undermined by a variety of barriers resulting in low participation such as limited resources, which hindered parents from being involved because of low-income status and their struggle to provide basic needs for their families (Murray et al., 2014).

Parents' Education

Parents who have had few or no successful education experiences are often intimidated by the school system and may believe that they have little or nothing to contribute to their children's education (State of Michigan, n.d.). The article discussed the challenges that parents may face in relation to being engaged in their children's education. The education system often uses specific terminology, concepts, and techniques with which parents may be unfamiliar. This unfamiliarity may inhibit their ability to understand and engage in their children's education (State of Michigan, n.d.). The article discussed using strategies such as providing parents with a sense of empowerment, avoiding the use of technical terminology, creating a parent education program, creating a parent education center, reiterating meaningful participation of parents, and creating parent volunteer programs for traditional parental involvement. For nontraditional parental involvement, schools may promote collaborative teaching, create a welcoming environment, and promote cultural understanding.

Parents' level of education may constitute a challenge to parents being involved in their children's education. Some parents do not want to go to their children's school because they think that they are illiterate, do not feel confident in talking to teachers or do not know what to say to them, and do not understand the system of the school (Human and Hope Association, 2017). Parents may not realize the significance of their children's education, so they may not care to involve themselves in it. Moreover, they may believe that only teachers are responsible for their kids' education. If their kids do not do well at school, such parents may blame the teacher. They may not understand their responsibility toward their children's learning (Human and Hope Association, 2017).

Parents Work Multiple Jobs

Working woman: a lack of involvement compounds her problems. She is a mother, a worker and an ideal wife at the same time (Mawere, Thomas, & Nyaruwata, 2015). This article evaluates the nature of parent involvement in Early Childhood Development. Many parents work multiple jobs that hinder them from supporting their child's education. This means they cannot support them at home or school. Participant B said, "I am a working parent, the teachers invite us during the week for consultations when I am busy at work (Mawere et al., 2015)." Most parents of students lack the time needed to be engaged in their child's education. It is not their intentions to be disengaged in their child's education, but due to the lack of time; they cannot be engaged.

Limited or Lack of Resources

Oftentimes the lack of parental involvement may look like it is because of the family's circumstances. However, according to research, families of low socioeconomic

status with limited resources actually are quite aware of their child's educational progress, although they may not be actively involved in it (Cox, n.d.). With limited or lack of resources, sometimes it can be extremely hard to get parents involved. To help break this barrier and improve parental involvement, work around the family's limited resources (Cox, n.d.). This means if they need food, help them sign up for food program on campus and off campus. If there are free resources on or off campus, inform those parents. Keep in mind that just because they may be lacking financially, that doesn't mean that they do not want to be involved in their child's education -- they may just not know how to be involved. Give parents a lot of options on how they can be a part of their child's education (Cox, n.d.).

Poverty

Student poverty is a major barrier to learning (Layton, 2015). Nine out of every 10 teachers stated they spent their own money on supplies, feed students (51%), help students get new clothing (49%), as well as get medical care (29%). Teachers who responded to the poll said they were spending about 20 percent of their time helping students resolve non-academic problems that stem from their lives outside school (Layton, 2015). This article indicated how children that are living in poverty is rising and it has an impact on classroom learning. They also indicated that there should be school-based social services, community partnerships, and outside professionals that can help low-income students if they would come into schools and work with students. But it can only happen when parents are willing to involve themselves in their children's education.

Strategies That Increase Parent Engagement as Perceived by Educators

Social Media/Multimedia Outlets

Keeping the lines of communication open between parents and the school is a good starting point but consider taking it a step further (Handy & Townsend, 2019). Social media/multimedia outlets can be a way to keep the line of communication open with parents. Using these different outlets can allow the schools to discuss important information the parents may miss in a newsletter they may never receive for their children. The school also used Blackboard messaging to get important announcements and emergency information out to parents, as well as social media outlets such as Twitter and a school Facebook page (Handy & Townsend, 2019). Handy and Townsend (2019) found that school personnel communicated with voice or email messaging in multiple languages to share upcoming events, activities, or emergency updates.

According to Ntekane (2018), parental involvement refers to a situation where parents are directly involved in the education of their children, they involve themselves and are involved by the school and teachers in the learning process of their children, and they fulfil their duties as parents in making sure that the learner is assisted in the process of learning as much as they possibly can. Ntekane (2018) found that when parents feel a part of their child's learning, they are willing to be involved and engaged. Achieving this level of engagement is accomplished by school personnel going out to the community to encourage parent participation. Publicizing ways for the community and parents to be engaged is through traditional means (announcements, flyers) and non-traditional methods which include the use of television, phone calls and sending emails (Ntekane,

2018). The use of effective strategies for encouraging parental involvement enabled the parents to be able to see the importance of being involved in their children's learning, and to be able to see the benefits that might result afterward (Ntekane, 2018).

Offer Dinner/Food

School Web Masters (2019) confirmed that one thing that brings people together is food! Meals can be a great way to foster a sense of community (School Web Masters, 2019). With parent engagement, schools can offer dinner or food to families. They can plan a dinner for families possibly through a food truck or cafeteria style. Maybe plan a spaghetti night coupled with an evening STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics) performance, or ask the PTO to bring in pizza to sell at a planned math night (School Web Masters, 2019). Events like this at local elementary schools can engage parents to be a part of their child's education. It also got those in the community out and engage.

SAC, PTO/PTA

Murray et al. (2014) found that parent engagement is enhanced when they participate in SAC/PTO/PTA. These organizations share re-search based practices and beliefs around parents' supervising their child's education and homework, providing academic assistance, participating in PTA, volunteering at the school, and other activities to support children's education (Murray, et al., 2014). Volunteering (e.g., aiding teachers in the classroom and chaperoning field trips) and attending PTA and similar school meetings were frequently mentioned as SBPI activities that parents should be a part of at their child's school (Murray, et al., 2014).

Volunteering

Handy and Townsend (2019) found that sometimes parents want to get involved but don't know exactly how to do that. Strategies that increased parent engagement include offering volunteer opportunities that allows parents to share their skills directly with students (Handy & Townsend, 2019). Several examples were given, as follows: Some parents may want to bake for a school event, or they may want to volunteer on their child's class trip. If parents knew how to express what they would like to do, then they can be actively engaged in their child's learning process.

Waterford (2018) suggested that it is never too late to build the foundations for parent-teacher communication in schools; and adds that the sooner foundations are developed, the more equipped parents and students become in supporting children in reaching their academic potential (Waterford, 2018). To increase parent engagement, strategies that transform involvement into a parent partnership lead to student success. Provide opportunities for parents to connect with the school. Volunteer shifts, class activities, or parent-teacher committees are all great engagement opportunities (Waterford, 2018). As long as parents have opportunities to be engaged, there will be increased parent engagement.

Meador (2019) found that many parents simply believe that they have minimal responsibilities when it comes to their child's education. When parents spend time in their children's classrooms there is often a change in parents' mindsets on. While this approach did not work for everyone everywhere, it can be an effective tool to increase parental involvement in many cases (Meador, 2019). Meador (2019) found if parents

volunteer in their child's classroom, they found that they enjoyed this type of interaction especially in early elementary school years. It was recommended that teachers continue to involve those parents and give them more responsibilities each time and pretty soon they found themselves valuing their child's education more as they become more invested in the process (Meador, 2019).

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Penn State University (2017) indicated that 79% of parents would become if there were parent conferences to support parent-teacher communication. Authors addressed the need for improvement outcomes for parent engagement practices, suggesting that there should be programs that strengthen parent-teacher relationship such as parent/teacher conference. By facilitating communication and collaboration between parents and teachers, these programs boost child academic and social-emotional skill development. However, simply having parents spend time or volunteer at their children's schools has not emerged as a strategy that boosts child outcomes (Penn State University, 2017). Parent/teacher conferences create help build strong relationships with parents by producing positive learning behavior in the classrooms (Penn State University, 2017).

Home Visits

Schools, child-care programs, and communities can support parent practices and enhance child outcomes by providing parents with support and guidance in the use of home learning materials and support warm and responsive parenting, while also providing opportunities for parents to get involved at school, using conferences and/or home visits to support parent-teacher communication and collaboration (Pennsylvania

State University, 2017). Home visits are a way that parents became engaged in their child's education. This article indicated that 79% of parents would become if there were home visits to support parent-teacher communication. These programs are typically delivered individually during home visits, or through a series of school-based parent group meetings. Parents are given learning materials and shown how to use them to help their children enjoy learning (Pennsylvania State University, 2017).

Family Night

Wood and Bauman (2017) discussed how to provide training, resources, and support to encourage family engagement at home. Family nights can be used in schools to strategies that can engage in schools and at home. Offer multiple ways for families to be involved at school that are linked to learning and program improvements (Wood & Bauman, 2017). Parents became engaged in their child's education. Build the capacity of both families and school staff to share responsibility and work together as equal partners in improving school and student outcomes (Wood & Bauman, 2017). Therefore, parents did not put all the responsibility on the educators.

Pandemic Presenting New Avenues for Parent and Teacher Engagement

Coteaching Community of Practice

Willis (2016) explored the concept of co-generativity by examining how a coteaching community of practice in a parent-teacher engagement project developed. This article examined how educators and researchers understood how communities of practice had a capacity that can significantly enhance the teaching and learning for all concerned. Therefore, community practices may be promoted initially and continually.

Results in this study examined how co-generative dialogue with parents is one way to build a community of practice in coteaching. Another way would be entering the cotaught classroom and sharing data with parent data. In conclusion, Willis (2016) indicated that the results of this research has application for school leaders and public policy makers in terms of the proactive roles participants who seek to encourage collaborative processes and practices within organizations such as schools may play.

Parent Engagement during COVID-19

Considering this pandemic, educators and parents had to band together to keep students learning and engaged at home. Witte, Ludvik, Franco, Trefiglio Mendes Gomes, Little, and Bratsch-Hines (2020) explored ways that parents maintain a strong relationship with their child's teacher to help ensure their child's academic success and healthy develop. This blog examined how parents and teachers can remain connected under this stressful circumstance. Results of this examination create simple ways to continue to foster parent-teacher relationships from a distance. In conclusion. Witte et al (2020) indicated that you 1) share your situation, 2) reach out often, 3) focus on strengths, 4) show your interest in collaboration, 5) work together to solve problems, and 6) celebrate success together. Research shows that these recommendations lead to success when it comes to maintaining effective, two-way relationships between parents and teachers.

Professional Development

PD is a valuable, research-based tool that can help educators continuously

enhance their attitudes, their knowledge, and their skills (Buendia & Macias, 2019; Nasreen & Odhiambo, 2018; Nooruddin & Bhamani, 2019). PD can be used to enhance educator's knowledge on a plethora of topics in education. Many participants are not enthusiastic about them unless they are receiving information that they are lacking. The learning that can occur during PD can positively impact student learning. Significant improvements in education have been found to be the result of successful PD (Pharis et al., 2019).

Professional development and learning have a long history in seminar-like models, as well as in the more educator-personal delivery approaches (Shaha, Glassett, Copas, & Huddleston, 2016). This article discussed how to maximize educator enhancement. Beyond college-based training and experience, seminars have been a traditional basis for defining and delivering PD for educators. The results in this article indicated that educational leaders and their organizations can greatly benefit from the implementation of such integrated approaches to both PDL Seminars and online, on-demand PDL for active educators (Shaha et al., 2016). If organization invest in both PDL, they benefited from the integration.

Professional development has emerged as key part of human resources development in education and educational leadership and management (Nguyen, 2019). This study investigated PD amongst educational policymakers, institutional leaders and teachers. It also presented key aspects of PD. Professional development is undoubtedly important for teachers, educational leaders and policymakers. Additionally, to make professional development programmes most effective, participants should also engage

active contributors, not simply as passive recipients of distributed knowledge (Nguyen, 2019). Results indicated that PD aimed to enhance individual's career competencies and enabled them to perform successfully in professional roles. Relevant PD can gain or improve their knowledge.

Developing an evaluation or research design in concert with the core components of the professional development programs enabled practitioners to further advance the field of professional development as well as address the critical need to support teachers' implementation of reform-based science teaching (McKeown, Abrams, Slattum, & Kirk, 2016). This article examined the effects of an ongoing PD program. The findings of this initial study demonstrate the promise of a professional development program that combines features known to be effective based on the literature with a sustained follow-up and continuous support (McKeown et al., 2016). PD programs strongly influenced participants' fundamental beliefs about the capacity to provide effective instruction in ways closely connected to the features of inquiry-based instruction.

Justification requirements were met for the number of sources used in this project study. A total of 26 sources were used in this project study.

Project Description

After approval is received from the Title I charter schools' district administrators to conduct a PD plan, I will present a 3-day training for rural Title I charter school educators serving K-3 students. The PD will be held at the school in the cafeteria during pre-planning days prior to the school year beginning chosen by the Title I charter

schools' district administrators. The training will focus on effective research-based ways to increase parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools.

A barrier to this PD could be that the educators lack of interest and they are not actively engaged. Another potential barrier could be that the technology or other equipment used during the training is not working on or during the training.

A solution to engage the teachers, I would meet with administrators and participants of this study to discuss and see which type of PD were successful in engaging their staff. I will mock the presentation and obtain feedback. I will also take notes of the participant's feedback and share throughout the training days. Therefore, any necessary changes can be incorporated as needed.

A solution to the technology or equipment not working, I will have the school's administrators check technology and equipment both the day before and morning of the training. In advance, I will have PD resources – printouts, so each participant will have a visual of the material. I will also have copies of other printouts that will be needed during the presentation.

The PD proposal for implementation will be an ongoing process based on the issue or the changes that may arise on this topic. I have planned and organized a 3-day training. On day 1, the focus will be on my findings from my study. Day 2 of the training will focus on the creation of Strategies to Increase Parent Engagement and New Avenues for Parent and Teacher Engagement. On day 3, it focused on other Strategies to Increase Parent Engagement and New Avenues for Parent and Teacher Engagement found. I will need to meet with the district administrators to speak with them

concerning the reservation of the 3-day training on campus and equipment. When the details are finalized and approved, I will provide the district administrators with all the details. A checklist was developed to help educators to encourage and maintain a parent-teacher relationship from a distance.

My primary role in the PD will be facilitator. I will be responsible for prepping all of the presentation materials. The materials will include sign in sheets, writing utensils, sticky note pads, PD resources – printouts, evaluation/feedback forms, needed technology, tape, and chart paper.

Project Evaluation Plan

At the conclusion of each day of the training, I will provide all the participants with an evaluation form so they can share feedback of the PD. The feedback in this evaluation is a type of formative assessment that will serve to understand how the educators felt about each session. It also will allow me to know if the participants gained knowledge and generate ideas about what needs to be improved. Formative assessments are an important part of the learning process (van der Nest, Long, & Engelbrecht, 2018). Using this formative assessment will provide me with important feedback in a timely manner. The feedback could help me determine what adjustments need to be made (Garcia & Lang, 2018). Evaluations will be used as a guide when I plan to conduct future presentations.

A follow-up meeting will be held during a district school board meeting to share relevant data. The educators will discuss the relevant data collected from the evaluations and how to proceed with the strategies they implement to increase parent engagement.

The follow-up meeting can provide feedback that will be used to determine each of the educators' strengths and struggles with implementation, as well as determine the focus for future PD on increasing parent engagement. The key stakeholders in this study will be educators serving K-3 students in rural Title I charter schools.

Project Implications

My project has potential social change implications that could help familiarize educators with new research-based strategies that can positively influence and create social change at rural Title I charter schools across the southeast with similar demographics. It can also increase my knowledge and practices regarding educators' perspective of benefits of, barriers of, and strategies for increasing parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools. Strategies discussed in this PD are considered very beneficial to educators in rural Title I charter schools. If the PD is a success at both rural Title I charter school and parent engagement increases, then the district school administrators could recommend that the PD be facilitated on other neighboring charter school campuses. Furthermore, other schools with similar demographics and issues could tailor the PD to meet the needs of the educators. The educators who experienced a significant increase in parent engagement could work collaboratively with the struggling educators so they may have a greater impact on parent engagement in their school.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

A low level of parent engagement existed in a rural Title I charter school serving K-3 students in the Southeast United States. This project study addressed educators' perspectives on benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for increasing parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools serving K-3 students. The educators' responses to semistructured interview questions led to my creation of this project. In this section, I

describe the project strengths and limitations, recommendation for alternative approaches, and what I have learned from the development of my project. I describe what I learned about scholarship and leadership. Finally, I describe the 3-day PD training at the local level to address the gap in practice regarding strategies for increasing parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools serving K-3 students. The strength of my project was supported by the findings from the project study.

Project Strengths

The project strengths were based on my findings identified in this study. The data analysis revealed four themes:

- Theme 1: Educators reported that student success, better behavior, academics, school attendance, and support at home and school were benefits of parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools.
- Theme 2: Educators reported that transportation, parents' education, parents working multiple jobs, limited or lack of resources, and poverty were barriers in rural Title I charter schools.
- Theme 3: Educators reported that using social media/multimedia outlets, offering dinner/food, continuing to have SAC, PTO/PTA, allowing parents opportunities to volunteer, continuing to have parent/teacher conferences, and doing home visits and family nights were strategies that could increase parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools.
- Theme 4: Educators reported that the pandemic created new avenues for parent and teacher engagement with coteaching as a community of practice.

The data analysis also revealed 16 subthemes. Subthemes that were identified from analysis of the semistructured interview responses and documents aligned with the three research questions. Subthemes that were strengths of this project included the following:

- better student behavior, improved academic performance, increased school attendance
- improved transportation
- more effective parent education
- availability of social media/multimedia outlets
- funding for dinner/food
- increased volunteering

The purpose of this study was to provide educators with benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for increasing parent engagement. The project study was created to address a gap in the research on practice by exploring rural Title I charter school educators' perspectives on benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for increasing parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools serving K-3 students. Conducting this study allowed me to collect pertinent data that were used to create a PD for educators on parent engagement. Using this face-to-face PD will allow me to observe the educators' emotions as they share more perspectives on benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for increasing parent engagement. I can also ask educators to clarify things they want to share and guide questioning when conducting this PD face-to-face. This PD can include educators serving K-12 students instead of being limited to educators serving K-3 students.

Another strength is the minimal cost associated with educators participating in the PD at their local school campus. The PD will be held at the school's cafeteria where the study was conducted. Therefore, there will be no travel costs for the educators who participate in the PD training. The school will provide all the equipment such as touch screen, projector, microphone, PA system, and computer. Items not provided by the school will be purchased by me, such as sign-in sheets, writing utensils, sticky note pads, printouts, evaluation/feedback forms, tape, and chart paper.

Project Limitations

The project limitations are that some educators may not endorse the PD training. Some educators may have negative attitudes toward the PD and may not participate. Once the results from this study are disseminated, I hope the educators will take an interest in this PD and focus on the parent engagement research. In addition, this PD may spark interest from other educators once the research-based strategies from my study and other studies are communicated to help struggling educators who face similar challenges as those in rural Title I charter schools.

The project deliverables will focus on a PD that will include information from the current literature review that will highlight educators' perspectives related to the themes identified in this study on benefits of, benefits of, and strategies for increasing parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools serving K-3 students.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

My study focused on the perspectives of educators (two administrators, eight teachers, and two parent liaisons) regarding the benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for

parent engagement in a rural Title I charter school. Further studies could address the perspectives of other middle and high school educators. My recommendations came from the literature on parent engagement. Findings may be used to answer how a low level of parent engagement in a local rural Title I charter school serving K-3 can affect children.

Additional research on educators' perspectives regarding the benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for parent engagement may be conducted as an alternative approach.

Additional research of benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for parent engagement may address a gap in the research and practice through the development of a PD plan.

Alternative definitions of the local problem may uncover other studies that address strategies to create additional support that may increase parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools. Alternative solutions to the local problem are presented in this project study to help educators increase parent engagement. There are other practical ways to improve parent engagement strategies that do not involve traditional models of PD, such as social media pages on parent engagement, articles or websites on parent engagement, and instructional coaches.

New strategies could help educators discover alternative solutions that can be efficient, beneficial, and affordable to conduct a PD plan. Another recommendation would be to conduct more research to provide extra support for future PD trainings as well as additional support that may increase parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

The project study was rigorous and required persistence. A scholarship was my motivation to complete this study. I asked questions of my committee members to gain the necessary knowledge to hone the skills that were required to complete this project study.

Learning Process Description

This project provided insight into the world of research. During this process, it took me some time to formulate the problem. Once I understood and clarified my problem and purpose for my project study, I was able to begin conducting my research. As I reviewed the literature, I became further engaged in this experience. My research problem was the minimal research that had been conducted on educators' perspectives regarding benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for increasing parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools serving K-3 students. Through this project study, I discovered that there was a low level of parent engagement at the local site, but most of the research had focused on teachers.

After I conducted my study, I developed my project. My work as a teacher gave me ideas that would allow me to create a PD training to implement the findings in this research. The goal was to find ways to increase parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools serving K-3 students. Creating a project study allowed me to address the problem of increasing parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools.

Reflective Analysis on my Personal Learning/Growth

My reflective analysis about my personal learning/growth of self as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer allowed me to become a more proficient writer throughout this process. Prior to this project study, I felt I was a strong and proficient writer. However, this level of writing exposed my weaknesses in writing. I gained a wealth of knowledge about writing at the doctoral level.

This knowledge helped me while I conducted this research. I was able to analyze my data and used my findings to create this project. I concluded that the project was a beneficial way to present research-based strategies that could help educators increase parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools.

Throughout my study, I had to guard against personal biases, and I could not assume that I already knew the answer to my research questions. Once I did this, I was able to find out what the educators' perspectives were regarding the benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for increasing parent engagement. I was able to obtain in-depth responses to answer the research questions in this study. The in-depth responses led me to create the project PD. After the data were analyzed, I was able to create a PD plan that was research based and could be used to increase parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools based on educators' perspectives.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

The problem addressed in this study was a low level of parent engagement in a local rural Title I charter school serving K-3 students. Due to the low level of parent engagement, I wanted to explore educators' perspectives regarding benefits of, barriers

to, and strategies for increasing parent engagement. As an educator and researcher, I hope that parent engagement will increase in rural Title I charter schools as a result of my project. I had to learn how to conduct research, collect data, and analyze current literature on parent engagement in schools. As a researcher, I learned how to make a positive contribution to the education field with my findings. I will continue to generate solutions to problems that arise, explore educators' perspectives, and improve on the practices in education.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Positive change at the local level may result from my exploration of educators' perspectives regarding benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for increasing parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools serving K-3 students. I concluded from data analysis that the lack of parent engagement does not affect all educators; it mainly affects educators who are in rural Title I charter schools serving K-3 students. The implications for social change include familiarizing educators with research-based strategies to increase parent engagement at rural Title I charter schools. The findings of this study led to the creation of this project. The recommendations for further research include exploring the perspectives of elementary, middle, and high school educators from other rural Title I charter schools.

Conclusion

This basic qualitative study addressed educators' perspectives regarding benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for increasing parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools serving K-3 students. The findings may address a gap in practice by revealing

strategies for increasing parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools serving K-3 students. Data were collected, research questions were answered, more literature was reviewed, and a PD plan was created as my project study. Through this journey, I have grown as a scholar, practitioner, researcher, leader, and project developer. I feel better prepared to conduct research and offer solutions to other educational problems that arise in my role as an educator. I am a lifelong learner, and I hope that my research project study will effect positive social change for stakeholders in rural Title I charter schools.

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Appendix: The Project**Professional Development Agendas for Day 1 Session 1 Agenda:**

8:00-8:30 Sign-In

8:30-8:45 Welcome/Icebreaker

8:45 - 9:00 Get to know You Activity

9:00-9:45 Purpose of the Study and the Findings

9:45-10:00 Break

10:00-11:00 Discussion (Benefits, Barriers, and Strategies that increase Parent Engagement) & New Avenues for Parent and Teacher Engagement.

11:00-12:15 Lunch (on your own)

12:15-1:00 Reflection on morning session

1:00-1:30 Questions, comments, concerns, evaluation

Day 2 Session 2 Agenda:

8:15-8:30 Sign-In

8:30-8:45 Welcome

8:45-9:00 Review from Day 1

9:00-9:45 Activity (Creation of Effective Strategies that increase Parent Engagement)

9:45-10:00 Break

10:00-11:00 Continue Activity & Discussion

11:00-12:15 Lunch (on your own)

12:15-1:00 Reflection on Morning Session

1:00-1:30 Questions, comments, concerns, evaluation

Day 3 Session 3

8:00 – 8:45 Breakfast (Donuts, Bagels, Fruit, and Coffee)

8:45 -9:15 Welcome & Sign-In

9:15 -10:15 Review from Day 2

10:15 – 10:30 Break

10:30 – 11:30 Coteaching with Parents & Parent Engagement Checklist

11:30 -12:15 Lunch (Provided)

12:15 – 1:00 Reflection on morning session

1:00 – 1:30 Questions, comments, concerns, evaluation

Appendix: The Project

Professional Development Evaluation

Educators' Perspectives on Parent Engagement in Rural Title I Charter Schools

Day 1 Session 1

Thank you for participating in Day 1 Session 1 of *Educators' Perspectives on Parent Engagement in Rural Title I Charter Schools*. Your feedback will be beneficial and provide valuable information to the trainer and school district administrators in increasing parent engagement in their school.

Use the following scale rating when choosing your response:

5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree

	5 = Strongly Agree	4 = Agree	3 = Neutral	2 = Disagree	1 = Strongly Disagree
1. Purpose, goal, and learning outcomes for Day 1 Session 1 were clearly stated					
2. The research clarified educators' perspectives on parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools.					
3. This information and discussions helped me understand the current situation: low level of parent engagement in a local rural Title I charter school serving children in grades kindergarten through third grade (K-3).					
4. This session provided engaging activities for groups discussion to better understand the need.					
5. The session provided strategies for increasing parent engagement.					
6. The PD activity helped me to better understand the need for parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools.					
7. Overall, the PD activity was a successful experience for me.					

List any suggestions you have for enhancing this or future PD activity.

Appendix: The Project

Professional Development Evaluation

Educators' Perspectives on Parent Engagement in Rural Title I Charter Schools Day 2 Session 2

Thank you for participating in Day 2 Session 2 of *Educators' Perspectives on Parent Engagement in Rural Title I Charter Schools*. Your feedback will be beneficial and provide valuable information to the trainer and school district administrators in increasing parent engagement in their school.

Use the following scale rating when choosing your response:

5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree

	5 = Strongly Agree	4 = Agree	3 = Neutral	2 = Disagree	1 = Strongly Disagree
8. Purpose, goal, and learning outcomes for Day 2 Session 2 were clearly stated					
9. The research clarified educators' perspectives on parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools.					
10. This information and discussions helped me understand the current situation: low level of parent engagement in a local rural Title I charter school serving children in grades kindergarten through third grade (K-3).					
11. This session provided engaging activities for groups discussion to better understand the need.					
12. The session provided strategies for increasing parent engagement.					
13. The PD activity helped me to better understand the need for parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools.					
14. Overall, the PD activity was a successful experience for me.					

List any suggestions you have for enhancing this or future PD activity.

Appendix: The Project

Professional Development Evaluation

Educators' Perspectives on Parent Engagement in Rural Title I Charter Schools Day 3 Session 3

Thank you for participating in Day 3 Session 3 of *Educators' Perspectives on Parent Engagement in Rural Title I Charter Schools*. Your feedback will be beneficial and provide valuable information to the trainer and school district administrators in increasing parent engagement in their school.

Use the following scale rating when choosing your response:

5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree

	5 = Strongly Agree	4 = Agree	3 = Neutral	2 = Disagree	1 = Strongly Disagree
15. Purpose, goal, and learning outcomes for Day 2 Session 2 were clearly stated					
16. The research clarified educators' perspectives on parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools.					
17. This information and discussions helped me understand the current situation: low level of parent engagement in a local rural Title I charter school serving children in grades kindergarten through third grade (K-3).					
18. This session provided engaging activities for groups discussion to better understand the need.					
19. The session provided strategies for increasing parent engagement.					
20. The PD activity helped me to better understand the need for parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools.					
21. Overall, the PD activity was a successful experience for me.					

List any suggestions you have for enhancing this or future PD activity.

Appendix: The Project

COVID-19 Parent Engagement Checklist



Please use the checklist below as a support tool to help create and assess effective two-way communication between teachers and parents during the COVID-19 crisis.

YES	NO	Did you.....
		1. Encourage parents to share their situation.
		2. Encourage parents to reach out often.
		3. Encourage parents to focus on their strengths.
		4. Encourage parents to show their interest in collaboration.
		5. Encourage parents to work together to solve problems.
		6. Encourage parents to celebrate success together.

Comments:

Appendix: Letter to the District Administrators

My name is Patricia Burns. I am currently enrolled at Walden University. As a part of the requirements for completing the Doctor of Education degree in Early Childhood Education at Walden University, I am conducting a basic qualitative study with interviews on perspectives of educators regarding parent engagement activities, barriers, benefits, and strategies. The title of my research is *Educators' Perspectives of Parent Engagement in K-3 Title I Charter Schools*. I have decided to conduct a project study at your school. This letter is to request your permission for educators to participate in my research study.

The purpose of this basic qualitative study with interviews is to address a gap in the research on practice by exploring educators' perspectives of benefits of, barriers to, and strategies for parent engagement in rural Title I charter schools serving K-3 students. The names of the teachers, administrators, parent liaison, as well as the school will be anonymous. The interviews are approximately 45 minutes to an hour.

If you have any questions, you may contact me at.... Thank you for your time and consideration of this case study.

Sincerely

Patricia Burns

Doctor of Education candidate

Walden University

01/05/2019

Appendix: Recruitment Letter of Educators

Dear Educator:

My name is Patricia Burns. I am currently enrolled at Walden University to pursue an EdD degree in Early Childhood Education. I am conducting a basic qualitative study with interviews. The purpose of this basic qualitative study is to address a gap in the research on practice by exploring educators' perspectives of parent engagement in Title I charter schools serving K-3 students. This letter is a request for your participation in my research study. I will include a Demographic form: Educators Experience and Background Information to see if you meet the following criteria (a) serve students in grades K-3, (b) are full-time educators at a charter school, and (c) will be willing to participate in a about 45 minutes to an hour interview. The names of each participant will be anonymous.

Interview Questions:

- ✚ What are rural Title I charter school educators' (administrators, teachers, parent liaison) perspectives of the benefits of parent engagement?
- ✚ What are rural Title I charter school educators' (administrators, teachers, parent liaison) perspectives of the barriers to parent engagement?
- ✚ What are the perspectives of rural Title I charter school educators' (administrators, teachers, parent liaison) of strategies that increase parent engagement?

If you have any questions, you may contact me at.... Thank you for your time and consideration of this case study.

Sincerely

Patricia Burns
Doctor of Education candidate
Walden University
01/05/2019

Appendix: Semistructured Interview Questions of Educators

<p>RQ 1: What are rural Title I charter school educators' (administrators, teachers, parent liaison) perspectives of the benefits of parent engagement?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sub Question A: Define what good, optimal parent engagement is in your own words. Prompt: I heard you say ... please give an example • Sub Question B: Describe the various benefits of parent engagement to students, to teachers, and the community.
<p>RQ 2: What are rural Title I charter school educators' (administrators, teachers, parent liaison) perspectives of the barriers to parent engagement?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sub Question C: Discuss your role in engaging parents in communicating, in volunteering at school, in student learning at home, and in participating in campus-related decision-making activities such as parent-teacher meetings? • Sub Question D: What barriers do you perceive to be present that prevent parent engagement in communicating? In volunteering at school? In student learning at home, and in participation in campus-related decision making?
<p>RQ 3: What are the perspectives of rural Title I charter school educators (administrators, teachers, parent liaison) regarding strategies that increase parent engagement?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sub Question E: In your role as an educator, what strategies are successful in engaging parents in communicating? In volunteering? In learning at home? In decision making? In collaborating with the community? Please give examples. • Sub Question F: Which strategies that increase parent engagement do you plan on using in your school?

Would you like to add anything else about parent engagement in your school?

Appendix: Participant Agreement

I, _____, an educator of a rural Title I charter school serving K-3 students agree to voluntarily be a participant in this basic qualitative study with interviews on educators' perspectives of benefits of, barriers to, and strategies to increase parent engagement in a rural Title I charter school serving K-3 students in the Southeastern United States. All information gathered and recorded in this study will be confidential. If at any point I wish to withdraw from this study, I will notify, the researcher instantly.

I _____, understand and agree to be a voluntarily participant in this project study.

Participant Signature

Printed Name

Date

Researcher Signature

Printed Name

Date