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Family Perceptions of Family Engagement: A Qualitative Study to Assist Stakeholders

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Family Perceptions of Family Engagement:

A Qualitative Study to Assist Stakeholders

By

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Bagwell College of Education

Kennesaw State University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Doctor of Education in Teacher Leadership

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Raynice Jean- Sigur

Dissertation Committee: Dr. Debra Coffey and Dr. Linda Grant

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To my family, friends and colleagues, thank you for believing in me. To my mother, every text message signed with a purple heart were sent at the most appropriate of times. Thank you for praying with me, for me and always seeing me finished. Your support was necessary to get to the end. To EmmaRose, thank you for smiling at me and, reminding me of what's most important when things felt most heavy. I love you all dearly.

Luke 12:48 To whom much is given, much will be required

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my daughter, EmmaRose Noel (Sunshine*).* Thank you for allowing me to serve as your mommy and teacher. When I first embarked on this program, I had no idea I would finish as a mother. When I found out I was expecting, I was excited and nervous having no idea how working, attending school and being a mom could work. But I was encouraged by other mothers in the program and thought if they could do it, we could do it too.

Thank you for motivating me, *WE DID IT*, this one is for *us.* I look forward to us continuing to support each other as we set out to accomplish all that *God* has for us and those we will *serve.*

Love,

Your Mommy,

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding

Abstract

This qualitative study sought to understand how professional working families with elementary age children perceive family engagement. Through one-on-one interviews, the researcher gained insight on how families define and perceive family engagement. The open-ended, one-on-one, semi-structured interviews included a purposeful sample of 8 participants. An analysis of data included a system of coding to link thoughts across data after reviewing, reflecting, and transcribing interviews. Their rich descriptions provide detailed information that is extremely useful to understanding the complexities of family engagement and its ability to support teachers, students, families and schools.

Findings from the study revealed the importance of families, teachers and schools communicating and collaborating to have family engagement success. According to the families in this study, family engagement involves two-way communication and relationship building that allows families and school personnel to collaborate, share their ideas and decision-making. Families also believe family engagement includes the involvement of curricular and extracurricular activities. Additionally, families discussed the important role technology plays in achieving successful family engagement by supporting communication, relationship building and involvement. Results from this study generated recommendations for elementary education stakeholders.

Keywords: Family Engagement, Teacher Leadership, Elementary School

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Teacher leaders focus on effective teaching and assessment strategies, classroom management skills, content expertise, and a myriad of other pedagogical skills and knowledge. However, an important part of development as a teacher leader is knowing how to collaborate genuinely and effectively with students' families. Research has shown that the most effective teacher leaders and schools are those with strong family engagement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

This research study supports understanding how families conceptualize family engagement in children's schooling. Family engagement refers to a mutually collaborative relationship with family members and school communities that focus on student success. Family is a phrase used to reflect the changing nature of the homes in which children reside, which may or may not include a parent or parents. Family also represents the rich contributions of individuals beyond parents, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, and siblings who play a significant role in caring for the child(ren) outside of the realm of school (Grant, 2016).

Informing research argues that schools will be successful only to the degree that they are successful in engaging families (Mertens & Anfara, 2008). Research further states that without family support and active participation, students will not achieve at acceptable levels (Mertens, & Anfara, 2008). With such an important part of the job for teacher leaders involving engaging families in the school, it was important to identify through research the family's true beliefs and attitudes towards family engagement.

Statement of the Problem

As a teacher I can share that what it means to be engaged as a family has different meaning to teachers and families. Teachers and families see different aspects of family engagement as important (Ferrara, 2009). To better understand the complexities and beliefs of family engagement, a qualitative study was needed and conducted. This study helped determine how professional working family members with elementary age children, conceptualize family engagement in children's schooling with a goal of increasing awareness and support of family engagement.

My interest in this study began after teaching for over 10 years and experiencing the complex issues related to family and school relationships. Throughout the years, I have listened to many frustrated teachers complain about the lack of family engagement within their local school community. Nevertheless, I have listened to numerous family members belonging to the same school communities speak of how well engaged as a family they are with their child(ren) and their school experience. With such conflicting beliefs from teachers and families it was apparent that what it means to be engaged as a family has different meaning to teachers and families. This contrast of statements caused me to question the following: What does family engagement mean to families? I wanted to investigate this concept.

According to Westat & Policy Studies Associates (2001), when teachers reach out to families, the families are more likely to be engaged in their child's education *in some way*, resulting in strong, consistent gains in student's performance in both reading and math (p. 1).

Families being engaged, "in some way," still leaves the question of, "What is family engagement?" This complex issue of family engagement was the reason this qualitative study was completed. This study investigated how the concept of family engagement relates to today's diverse families' lifestyles, issues, and beliefs about the role of family engagement in children's education.

Purpose and Significance of Study

Dr. Joyce Epstein (2009), a leader in the field of family engagement developed a framework focused on the six areas of family engagement. Numerous research studies have confirmed the positive impact of family engagement on students from early childhood through high school. *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement* (Henderson & Mapp, 2002) reviewed hundreds of studies, which overwhelmingly indicated that high-quality family engagement improves and support student achievement. One can assume that without effective family engagement, students may struggle to achieve academically. Family engagement has long-range effects as children matriculate through school. It was important to study what family engagement is to support children's learning in school over time (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Researching how families conceptualize family engagement helps gain a better understanding of the diverse possible interpretations of family engagement. I believe that researching how families conceptualize family engagement will increase family and teacher support of each other as well as students. It may be clear and visible that some family members are engaged but, others may not be engaged in schools in the most observant ways such as

volunteering in school. However, that may not mean that they are not engaged or interested in their child's school experience (Campton-Lily, 2004).

An aim of this study is to challenge participants and readers to consider what they truly understand about family engagement and the aspects that families view as important. Challenging participants and readers to deeply reflect on family engagement beliefs will help them identify attitudes that will promote effective family collaboration practices that benefit teachers, families and most importantly, students.

Research questions

This study answered the following research questions:

1. How do family members define and perceive family engagement?

2. According to families, which school practices promote family engagement?

3. According to family members, which school practices present barriers to family engagement?

4. What are the perceptions of families regarding their responsibility for communicating with teachers and being engaged as a family?

Conceptual Framework

The researcher utilized Dr. Epstein and others framework on family engagement with the review of the literature to determine significant variables that would contribute family engagement. Those factors include the family's perception of family engagement, family methods of communication, the school practices that promote family engagement and the school practices that are considered barriers to family engagement.

Figure 1.1
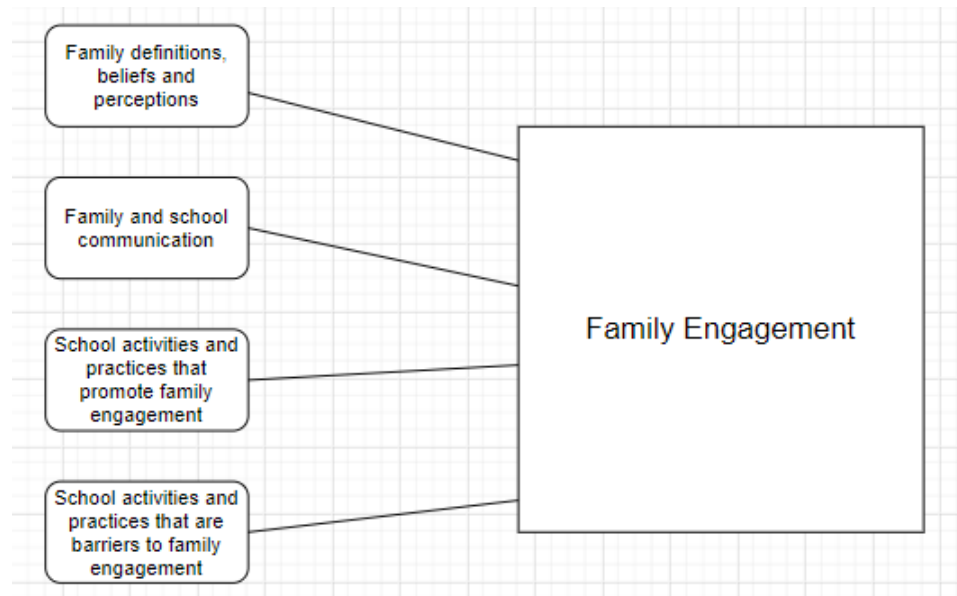
Key Terms

For the purpose of clarification, the important terms used throughout this study have been

defined. The following terms are:

Cocurricular activities: activities, programs, and learning experiences that complement,

in some way, what students are learning in school.

Extracurricular activities: activities, programs and learning experiences that do not fall

in the scope of what students are learning in school.

Family: a phrase used to reflect the changing nature of the homes in which children

reside, which may or may not include a parent or parents. It can be biological or

nonbiological, chosen or circumstantial. They are connected through culture, language, tradition, shared experiences, emotional commitment, and mutual support.

Family engagement: Represents a mutually collaborative relationship with family and school communities where parents are partners and share decision making that focuses on student success (Grant, 2016).

Parent: Refers to biological, adoptive, and stepparents as well as primary caregivers, such as grandparents, other adult family members, and foster parents.

Parental involvement: Parents participating in activities and contributing to student and school needs.

Perceptions: one's interpretation of information

Primary caregiver: A person over 18 that is responsible for the care of an elementary-age child.

Teacher: An individual that implements high quality instruction and is held responsible by school leadership for the academic achievements of classroom students.

Teacher leader: Teachers that lead within and beyond the classroom; identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders; influence others toward improved educational practice; and accept responsibility for achieving the outcome of their leadership.

Title 1 school: A federally funded school that meets the needs of low-income students.

Organization of Study

Chapter 1 provides the background of this study as well as the statement of the problem and the purpose and significance of the study. The conceptual framework and a list of relevant terms can also be found in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 includes a review of literature researched and summarizes the findings related to the theoretical framework. Chapter 3 covers the methodology of the research and the processes used to conduct the research. This chapter also includes a description of the participants and the instruments used to collect data. Chapter 4 presents the findings organized by themes identified through one-on-one interviews and research questions. The final chapter, Chapter 5 includes a discussion, recommendation for stakeholders, and the conclusion of the study followed by the limitations and implications for further research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter focuses on the review of literature on family engagement and lays the foundation for this study. It provides insight regarding the current state and policy regarding family engagement, benefits, barriers, and Joyce Epstein's Six Types of Parental Involvement serving as the theoretical model for this qualitative study.

Defining Family Engagement

In 2010, The National Family, School and Community Engagement Working Group (now the NAFSCE Policy Council) developed a definition of family engagement. NAFSCE endorses family engagement as a shared responsibility in which schools and other community agencies and organizations are committed to reaching out to engage families in meaningful ways, and in which families are committed to actively supporting their children's learning and development. According to the families in this study, family engagement involves two-way communication that allows families and school personnel to collaborate, share their ideas and decision-making. Families also believe family engagement includes the involvement of curricular and extracurricular activities.

The NAFSCE makes clear there are low, moderate and high levels of family engagement. Low-level family engagement involves contributing type activities such as, participating in fundraisers, performances/celebrations and, or volunteering. Moderate levels of engagement involve participating in activities related to academics such as parent-teacher conferences, assisting with homework, or back to school night. High levels of engagement are collaborative,

culturally competent, and focused on improving children's learning. Examples of high levels of engagement are regular, personalized communication between school and family, incorporating family's culture and interest to differentiate instruction, goal-setting talks with families, and or classroom observations.

As an educator, I can speak to the commonality of teachers soliciting low to moderate levels of family engagement from families. Schools and teachers often request families to participate by volunteering, attending performances, assisting with homework and attending parent-teacher conferences. High levels of family engagement do occur but, do not seem to occur as frequently. A goal of this study is to further investigate families understanding of family engagement and its relationship to the level's family engagement may exhibit.

Family Engagement Mandates

Historically, family engagement has been consistently mandated at both federal and state levels, beginning with Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education of 1965 and continuing through the No Child Left Behind Legislation (1994) and the Obama administration's blueprint for reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (2010) (Grant, 2016). These mandates "reflect the importance of strengthening and supporting family engagement both through specific programs designed to involve families and communities and through policies that will engage and empower parents. The mandates also ensure that families have the information they need about their children's school and enhance the ability of teachers and leaders to include families in the education process" (U.S. Department of Education, 2010, p.1). It has always been critical to think about connecting schools and families. Federal and state leadership have consistently supported that among the features of the most effective schools

are strategic approaches to including families in constructive relationships (Booth & Dunn, 1996;

Jeynes, 2005).

Effectiveness of Family Engagement

A recent study addressed the perceptions of family engagement and how to broaden the

vision of what it means to be engaged as a family. Ferrara (2009) surveyed teachers, classified

staff, parents, administrators, and preservice teachers on their perceptions of family engagement.

The study disclosed that each group had a disparate view of what constitutes family engagement

(Ferrara, 2009). Stitt and Brooks (2014) also emphasized the need for the reconceptualization of

family engagement and for expansion of the type of studies that undergird related policy. These

researchers suggest it is very possible that current models of family engagement may not be

appropriate for various schooling or for different communities around the country.

Another study conducted by Epstein & Dauber (1991) examined the connections between

school programs of family engagement, teachers' attitudes, and the practices that teachers use to

involve families of their own students. This study used data from 171 teachers in 8 inner-city

elementary and middle schools to examine patterns at schools in different academic subjects,

under various classroom organizations (self-contained, semi-departmentalized,

departmentalized), and under different levels of shared support for family engagement by the

teachers and significant other groups. The researchers concluded that variables such as education

level, attitudes toward school and, school practices have important implications for the types and

strengths of school programs and practices of family engagement. These studies reveal a very

narrow understanding of family engagement within the education community (Ferrara, 2009).

Research studies have also documented the finding that students are more likely to succeed in school when their families are engaged (Mertens, & Anfara, 2008). As an educator, it may seem obvious to school personnel when families are engaged in the traditional ways such as volunteering or chaperoning school events. However, what if families are not engaged in schools in those traditional ways. This does not mean they do not want to be engaged in their child's education (Compton-Lily, 2004). It may instead mean that teachers and families need to better understand definitions and diverse views of what it means to be engaged within the learning environment. What it means to be engaged as a family has different meaning to teachers and family members; teachers and families see different aspects of family engagement as important (Ferrara, 2009).

Researchers have stated, "educators need to know how to work with families and communities because these competencies are required every day of every year of every teacher's professional career" (Epstein, Sanders, & Clark, 1999, p.29). Working toward genuine partnership with families can be one of the most rewarding experiences for educators. Creating those partnerships can be difficult to achieve. Nevertheless, researchers have found that when teachers reach out to families, the families are more likely to be engaged in their child's education in some way, resulting in strong, consistent gains in student's performance (Westat & Policy Studies Associates, 2001). This qualitative research study will investigate these concepts to determine how families conceptualize family engagement in children's schooling with a goal of increasing their support of each other and students.

Benefits of Family Engagement

There are many benefits of strong family engagement. Researchers have found that family engagement may account for 10% to 20% of the variance in student achievement levels and that family engagement at the elementary level was a strong predictor of student achievement in urban schools (Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2003, Jeynes, 2005, Jeynes, 2007). Family engagement also appears to have a long-range effect as children progress through school, and the more families support their children's learning, the better they do over time (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Benefits of Family Engagement for Families

Studies have found that families who are engaged in their children's education tend to have more positive attitudes and be more satisfied with their child's school and teachers (Cotton & Wikelund, 2001). There is also an increase in families' confidence. Family members may also gain a better understanding of their child's skills, abilities, and development and learn how to handle parenting issues, such as discipline, nutrition, or how to help with homework (Diffily, 2004).

Benefits of Family Engagement for Teachers and Schools

Family engagement also benefits teachers and schools. Researchers have found that schools with highly rated family engagement make greater gains on state tests than schools with lower rated family engagement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Teachers benefit from the extra support and attention that families can give their child, whether volunteering in the class or helping at home. Any support from families supports the teacher's goal of student success.

Schools can also benefit. Other research has shown that school safety is increased with the presence of active family and community members throughout a school (Saunders, 1996).

Barriers of Family Engagement

Despite the benefits, there are some barriers to family engagement. Teachers finding time in a busy day to build relationships is a major barrier to family engagement (Lawson, 2003). Teachers' preferences for traditional school involvement such as volunteering, chaperoning field trips, or acting as a class parent to organize events may also limit family engagement (Edwards & Young 1990). This approach centered on meeting the teacher/school's needs without regard to a family's perspective or needs relating to their child's education, may offer few opportunities for meaningful interactions and relationship building with families (Lawson, 2003). This approach may especially prohibit engagement with families with low education levels, living in poverty, or who do not speak English. A national survey of over 17,000 families found that less than half of families without a high school education or who did not speak English attended school events, compared to over 85% of educated families. The survey also revealed, only 27% of poor families volunteered at school or served on school committees (Noel, Stark, & Redford, 2013). Based on the data, family engagement is lacking from families with limited education, limited income and limited English.

In addition to teachers and school practices, families may also have barriers that keep them from being engaged. Just like teachers, families having time is also a barrier for families being engaged. Teachers and schools may make this even more difficult by only offering opportunities for family engagement during school hours without any flexibility (Lewis & Henderson, 1997). This is a huge inconvenience for some busy working families.

Another barrier noted by Lewis and Henderson (1997) is that an unwelcoming school environment may turn families away from visiting the school. School policies such as not allowing siblings to come to school with a family member when volunteering is another example of a barrier. A low priority of family engagement funding in high-poverty schools is another barrier (Roza, 2005). A major barrier for families who are new immigrants or dual language learners includes the inability to understand the majority language of the school and communications going home (Antunez, 2000; Collier & Auerbach, 2011). These and other barriers may be daunting but, it is important to recognize barriers before committing to finding ways to overcome these obstacles and remedy the complexities of family engagement.

Theoretical Framework

Dr. Joyce Epstein and colleagues (2009) developed a framework that focuses on six types of family involvement necessary for successful family-school partnerships. This framework served as the conceptual framework and theoretical model for this qualitative study. The six types of involvement include:

1. Parenting

2. Communicating

3. Volunteering

4. Learning at home

5. Decision making

6. Collaborating with the community.

The first type of involvement presented by Epstein is parenting. Parenting includes helping families with parenting skills and encouraging home conditions to support children as students. It also includes schools better understanding families by collaborating to make sure families' backgrounds, cultures, and goals for children are recognized. The second type of involvement is communicating. Communicating focuses on providing information about school programs and student academic success. It can also focus on ensuring that two-way communication exists between home and school. The third type of involvement is volunteering. Volunteering involves recruiting, training and scheduling family volunteers. It also includes making sure that teachers have time to work with volunteers and provide proper support for their work with students and the school. The fourth type of involvement is learning at home. Learning at home promotes family involvement with children at home such as homework, discussing the school day, or setting goals. It also includes developing authentic home extension activities that are interactive for both families and students. The fifth type of involvement is decision making. Decision making offers opportunities for families to participate in school decision making, governance, and advocacy through various collaborative organizational teams. The sixth and final type of involvement involves coordinating community resources and services for families, students, and the school through all types of groups: business, cultural, and civic organizations, and higher education.

Dr. Joyce Epstein's framework served as a benchmark to measure and analyze the data collected through in-depth interviews of family members. To bridge the gap between involvement and engagement, The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' model of parent involvement and family engagement also influenced and supported the measurement of

data (see Appendix D).   This model played a key role in helping better understand and measure

the in-depth interview results in ways that inform and improve practices regarding relationship

building and family engagement.

Summary

Many studies exist regarding family engagement and the effects on student learning and

achievement. In the studies, families display of engagement are compared with student learning

and achievement (Oswald, D., 2018). Studies also exist on how to increase family engagement

(Elsleger, B., 1999). These studies also examine the practices that teachers use to involve

families of their own students (Elsleger, B., 1999). Few studies exist with a purpose to better

understand family engagement and how families conceptualize family engagement in children's

schooling. Through qualitative research I examined family perceptions of family engagement to

promote a deep understanding of what it means to be engaged as a family.

A very important part of teacher leadership is developing partnerships with families of

students. Perhaps the first step in becoming a responsive teacher in connecting with the families

of students is to reflect on beliefs about family engagement (Grant, 2016). This relationship will

serve the best interests of the student in both the school and home settings, for the primary

purpose of increasing student achievement (Epstein, 2002).   The reciprocal benefits of family

engagement are numerous, all constituents, including children, families, educators, and the

school community, reap the positive rewards of family engagement (Grant, 2016).

This study contributes to the literature by broadening the definitions and perceptions of

family engagement. What it means to be engaged as a family may have different meaning to

teachers and families because teachers and families see different aspects as important. As widely used as the term family engagement is, its meaning may not always seem clear. Researching how families conceptualize family engagement broadens the vision of what it means to be engaged as a family. I believe that uncovering the definitions and views of family engagement may increase family and teacher support of each other as well as students. This study provides information about the understanding of what it means to be engaged as a family and encourages stakeholders to better understand family definitions and views of family engagement.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This study used qualitative in-depth interview research methods as foundation for data collection, and analysis. By conducting in-depth interviews of family members, family's perceptions of family engagement were revealed. As the researcher, interpretivism is best associated with my role as researcher. Interpretivism aligns with my goal of better understanding family perceptions of family engagement. Because of my experience as a teacher collaborating with families in the educational process of their child, I had an empathetic understanding to family's perceptions; I also believe being a primary caregiver to a young child also allowed for better understanding family perceptions of family engagement.

Regarding bias, I understood that as the researcher it was impossible to completely avoid my personal beliefs. Instead, I monitored my personal views, remained aware of my feelings and what they were helping me to learn or, keeping me from understanding. This awareness allowed me to have open dialogue with participants during our one-on-one interviews. The open dialogue supported me in listening carefully, restating, and clarifying participant statements and gaining true understanding. I remained open to exploring both my own perceptions as well as the participants to carefully interpret their meaning.

Research Questions

Powerful themes emerged through dialogue based on the following research questions:

1. How do family members define and perceive family engagement?

2. According to families, which school practices promote family engagement?

3. According to family members, which school practices present barriers to family engagement?

4. What are the perceptions of families regarding their responsibility for communicating with teachers and being engaged as a family?

Participants

Participants from the Midwest, Southwest and Southeast region of the United States were interviewed. The participants in the study included professional working families of elementary school children in grades Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) through 5th grade. A purposeful sampling was used to identify participants in the study. Purposeful sampling is a type of sampling technique where participants are selected based on specific characteristics. The purposeful sample for this study included a sample size of 8 participants. Each participant shared the characteristics of being primary caregivers over 18 years of age. The selection of family members was based on selecting those willing to participate who fit the criteria of being the primary caregiver of elementary school students in Pre-Kindergarten through 5th. The requirement was for family members to be the primary caregiver and over the age of 18.

The researcher selected family members who met the criteria and asked them if they were interested in participating in the study. Participants were asked in-person as well as by phone if they were interested in participating. If the participants expressed an interest, the researcher emailed a consent letter for the participants to sign and return by scanning and emailing. Once the researcher received the signed consent letter, the researcher contacted the participant to schedule a mutually convenient time to proceed with an interview.

Table 3.1

The table below presents information about each participant in the study. To ensure the
confidentiality of the participants pseudonyms were used.

Table 3.1 Demographics of Family Interviews

Participant	Gender/Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Number of Children	Public or Private School	Grade level of child(ren)
Lori	Female 32	African American	Information Technology Sales	3	Public	6th, 1st, Pre-k
Lisa	Female 39	African American	Assistant Principal	2	Public	3rd, 2nd
Chance	Male 46	African American	Teacher	2	Public	3rd, 2nd
Lauren	Female 38	Caucasian	Stay at home mom	5	Public	1st, Kindergarten, Pre-K
Alice	Female 35	African American	Teacher	2	Public & Private	3rd, Pre-k
Nicole	Female 48	African American	Teacher	1	Private	Pre-k
Ben	Male 34	African American	Realtor	3	Public	6th, 1st, Pre-k
Ashley	Female 37	Caucasian	Occupational Therapist	1	Private	Pre-K

Data Collection Procedures and Protocol

The researcher sought and attained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the
university prior to conducting the study. All participants completed and returned the signed

consent letter via scan or e-mail prior to interviewing. The consent letter detailed the purpose of

the research as well as any benefits and risks before scheduling and proceeding with the

interview (see Appendix B).

Due to COVID-19, face to face interviews were discouraged in order to maintain safety

protocols and social distancing. In keeping with social distancing, the researcher scheduled

interviews using ZOOM video conferencing and telephone calls. The researcher followed the

interview protocol for family members (see appendix A). After the interview, the researcher

reviewed, reflected and transcribed the interviews. Participants were emailed their interview

transcript for their verification and clarification. Once I received a response from the participant

that the transcription was accurate; I began coding the interviews. I used a thematic analysis

approach for this qualitative study.

Data Analysis

An analysis of data included a system of coding to link thoughts across data after

reviewing, reflecting, and transcribing interviews using Temi computer software (2020). Temi's

computer software helped track the commonly used language amongst participants. To interpret

the language and data collected through family interviews, I used a thematic analysis approach

for this qualitative study. The thematic approach allowed me to identify, analyze and interpret

patterns of meaning within the qualitative study. To uncover the themes in the rich descriptions

from participants through interviews I coded each transcript line by line and pulled out common

language and themes used by all participants. The process of coding allowed me to organize the

common themes of each participant's interview by identifying concepts that relate to one another.

The three common themes of communication, relationship building, and involvement were extrapolated from the information provided by all participants.

Table 5.1

The table below presents information on the relationship between the research questions and themes developed.

Table 5.1 Research questions and themes

Research Question	Theme
How do family members define and perceive family engagement?	• Communication • Communication to build relationships • Involvement (in and out of school)
According to families, which school practices promote family engagement?	• Culture • Involvement activities (cocurricular, extracurricular) • Communication (academic) • Communication to build relationships (technology)
According to family members, which school practices present barriers to family engagement?	• Communication (overload of technology and educational jargon) • Time
What are the perceptions of families regarding their responsibility for communicating with teachers and being engaged as a family?	• Communication (initiated by family) • Communication (with child) • Involvement (support in and out of school)

Validity

The validity of a qualitative study can be strengthened by applying differing strategies. Creswell (2009) suggests that qualitative researchers use at least one, if not multiple strategies to strengthen a study. This study involved the following strategies to strengthen this qualitative study.

To assure credibility, I interviewed 8 different family members. By interviewing multiple participants, I was able to gather rich comprehensive descriptions of data from various families. After interviewing the research participants, I shared the interpretive process with each participant to ensure member checking. Participants were emailed their interview transcripts and asked to verify the transcription was correct and add or edit any of the information shared if necessary. Participants responded by verifying the information was correct and did not have any changes or additions to the transcription. Throughout the research process, I was attuned to my personal views, perspectives, and emotions by describing my own beliefs regarding family engagement using audio recordings. I shaped new questions by examining my perspectives and, I remained open to participants beliefs shared about family engagement.

Ethical Considerations

Regarding ethical behaviors, to do no harm was the cornerstone of my ethical conduct. Ultimately, I minimized risks and increased benefits by being open and honest about the research practices and findings. It was also ethically imperative that I obtained informed consent and necessary permissions from participants while maintaining confidentiality of information shared. Prior to conducting the study, I applied to the university describing the purpose of the study, data collection procedures, risks, benefits to gain IRB approval. After receiving IRB approval, consent from participants and, interviewing participants, I shared the interview transcript with participants to avoid misinterpretations.

Chapter 4

Participant Findings

The intent of this qualitative study was to determine the family's definitions, perceptions and expectations of family engagement. The study involved collecting data through open-ended, one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with a purposeful sample of 8 participants. The selection of family members was based on selecting those willing to participate who fit the criteria of being the primary caregiver of elementary school students in Pre-Kindergarten through 5th. All participants were over the age of 18 and served as the primary caregiver. All participants except for one currently held jobs in specific professions. All participants did work in a professional at some point in their lives. The individuals that participated in this study did so willingly and their identities remain confidential. To ensure the privacy and protection of each participant pseudonyms will be used as well as brief descriptions of the information shared through interview.

In the section below an analysis of the interviews in relation to the theme's communication, family engagement practices, and demonstrations of family engagement will be discussed. The analysis is supported by interview data from professional working families of elementary school children in grades Pre-Kindergarten through 5th.

The researcher analyzed primary caregivers' responses related to the following research questions:

1. How do family members define and perceive family engagement?

2. According to families, which school practices promote family engagement?

3. According to family members, which school practices present barriers to family engagement?

4. What are the perceptions of families regarding their responsibility for communicating with teachers and being engaged as a family?

Participant Stories

Lori. Lori is an African American female who works in information technology sales. She is originally from the Midwest and recently moved to the Southeast. Lori is the mother of three children, two boys and one girl. Her oldest son is a rising 6th grader, her daughter is a rising1st grader and her youngest son is a Pre-Kindergarten student. Lori's two oldest children attend public school and her youngest attends school at home.

When asked to define family engagement, Lori said, "family engagement is being involved and spending time together" (Lori's interview, 4/18/2020). When describing being involved, Lori exampled activities such as helping with homework, attending school activities, and communicating with teachers. When Lori spoke about spending time together, she first discussed how it was once difficult to spend time with her family because of home responsibilities. Nevertheless, Lori said now she makes a point to involve the children in her daily domestic activities so they can spend time together and engage as a family. Specifically, Lori said,

> Sometimes the kids say, "mom we didn't do anything today," and I must remind them, we cooked together, read together, finished laundry together, went to the grocery store etc. We did a lot! There are other times where we watch movies or, when we let

the kids dance or tumble in the living room and my husband and I watch and rate them for fun. Other times we hop in the car and ride around in the field with my husband while he works, he's in real estate. We listen to music, talk and just learn more about each other's likes and interests. It's important to me and my husband that our children know that it doesn't take a lot of money to engage as a family and that it's about spending time together, getting to know each other, communicating, and doing things together no matter the task (Lori's interview, 4/18/2020).

Lisa. Lisa is an African American Assistant Principal at a High school in her local community. She is originally from the Midwest and has lived in the Southwest for over 15 years. She is the mother of two boys, a rising 3rd grader and a rising 2nd grader; both children attend the same public school.

According to Lisa, "family engagement is about communicating and participating in school activities." Communication she said,

is the responsibility of both the teacher and the family. Teachers should consistently communicate with families by phone, email, newsletter or grade reports to make sure parents are aware of how their child is doing in class, (if they're struggling with anything or if they're doing great socially or academically). I think families should communicate when they want to know more about what's going on in class. I also think families should reach out to the teacher when they hear good things coming from their child because that can encourage the teacher (Lisa's interview, 5/1/2020).

Lisa also shared that by being in education she noticed that as important as communication was, teachers in general do not like to reach out to families and promote family engagement,

> *from what I've seen as an administrator, a lot of teachers do not contact families for whatever reason. I don't think teachers understand just how helpful it can be to build relationships with families and the role they play in building those relationships. Maybe some sort of professional learning to help teachers become more comfortable communicating with families would help (Lisa's interview, 5/1/2020).*

Lisa further suggested that time may be a reason teacher's do not communicate with families,

> *I know time is an issue, some teachers want to communicate but they don't have enough time in the day. It would be nice to have time set aside in a teacher's day to call families and say "hey your child is doing great or, we're having a fair will you be able to make it? I also think it's just as important for families to initiate communication with teachers and to know that being connected to the school and, being engaged can truly motivate their child. I'm not sure that families know all the benefits of being engaged as a family" (Lisa's interview, 5/1/2020).*

Regarding participation, Lisa felt it was key for families to attend activities offered at school so they can continue, and families and schools can stay connected. "It's important for families to attend activities planned because when they don't attend them schools stop having them. If there are no activities for families to get involved and connect with schools, it can be difficult for families and schools to engage and connect" (Lisa's interview, 5/1/2020).

Chance. Chance is an African American middle school teacher and father of two boys, a rising 3rd grader and a rising 2nd grader; both children attend the same public school. According to Chance, "family engagement is being involved and doing things with your children in and out of school" (Chance's interview, 5/1/2020). Chance described activities such as traveling together, building and fixing things around the house, and helping with homework when discussing being involved. Interestingly, Chance mentioned that spending time and being engaged was often an issue when it came to school activities.

> *I wish I could be more engaged and spend more time with them at school, but the time of day is usually an issue. Both of my boys have received awards and had special events at school that I missed because it's during the day. They invite us to come and do things during work hours and it's not easy to take off last minute. I wish they offered more opportunities for families to engage during the early evening or even the weekend outside of school. We're always looking for things to do as a family on the weekends (Chance interview, 5/1/2020).*

While time during the day to engage as a family was an issue, Chance spoke to the benefits of using technology supported by the school to engage families. Chance shared,

> *I will say at the boys' school, they do a good job of engaging families through social media and the other apps they use to communicate. I look forward to the challenges they have us do as families to send in pictures and different things. It makes me feel like they care about us not just about school stuff but outside of school as well. I wish I could be more physically present, but I do feel connected through social media and*

the apps. I definitely think it strengthens our school relationship as a family to be able to communicate with teachers using technology (Chance's interview, 5/1/2020).

Lauren. Lauren is a Caucasian stay-at home mother to 4 children, 3 girls and one boy. For over 10 years she taught as an elementary school teacher until her family grew to the point where she felt it was best for her to stay home. Lauren's oldest daughter is in the first grade, the second oldest daughter is in Kindergarten and her two youngest son and daughter are both in Pre-K; each of her children attend the same public school.

Lauren believes family engagement is the action schools and families put in place that bring families together. Lauren shared,

> *Every school is different, so family engagement is different at each school just as it is for each family. I think overall it's anything the school or family plans or puts in place that promotes families and school communities working together, sharing ideas and focusing on student success. Some schools and families may focus a lot on academic activities if that's what's needed to improve student success, other schools and families may focus on extracurricular activities to improve student success (Lauren's interview, 5/7/2020).*

When asked how family engagement was demonstrated Lauren responded,

> *I guess by planning and doing whatever it is that supports families and makes them and the student more successful. I know that sounds broad but again, I think it can be so many things. I think what's common among any demonstration of family engagement is communicating and being in relationship, having trust, planning, trying new things, working together and student success (Lauren's interview, 5/7/2020).*

Alice. Alice is an African American special education teacher in the elementary school setting. She is also the mother of two boys, her oldest son is in 3rd grade and the youngest is in Pre-K. While the oldest attends public school, the youngest attends private school. Prior to Alice's employment as a teacher, she was a stay-at-home mom. It was through her experience as a stay-at-home mom that she believes she learned what family engagement meant to her and that is, "partnering with schools" (Alice's interview, 5/1/2020). Alice shared,

> being a stay-at-home mom afforded me the time to be involved at the local school level and partner with my son's school. I stayed in close communication with his teacher and I was able to contribute to the class and students by helping the teacher. I would go into the class and help or, if there was something I could do at home and take to the class to help I would do that too (Alice's interview, 5/1/2020).

Alice believes that to be engaged and partner with teacher's, open communication is key. Specifically, Alice shared,

> I've partnered with several of my son's teachers and they all have their own style but, from what I can tell, family engagement only works when there is consistent and open communication; it can be by phone, email, text, blog, social media, whatever works for everyone as long as it's consistent and open. When the teacher and parent can share ideas, plan and partner together to do what's best for the students', I think that's true family engagement (Alice's interview, 5/1/2020).

Nicole. Nicole is an African American elementary school teacher and mother to a daughter. Nicole's daughter attends Pre-K at a private school in her community. When Nicole spoke about family engagement, she reiterated the importance of communication.

> *I can't say this enough, communication, communication, communication. Communication with families, communication with teachers, communication with leaders, communication with the community and most importantly communication with students. Everyone communicating together, listening to each other because with communication comes relationship and understanding; relationship an understanding set the stage for change and impact (Nicole's interview, 5/14/2020).*

Nicole also spoke about how the responsibility of family engagement lies with the school. Specifically, Nicole stated,

> *The more I think about family engagement, I think the school leaders and teachers determine the success of family engagement. I hear a lot of teachers and leaders complain about a lack of family engagement. It makes me wonder if they know what it means to be engaged and, what responsibilities they hold themselves accountable in engaging families. A school is home to teachers and leaders first, families are like invited guests. I think the attitudes and beliefs of teachers and leaders along with the policies in place, have everything to do with the success of family engagement. Family engagement starts with the school creating an atmosphere where families can communicate, get involved and, give ideas (Nicole's interview, 5/14/2020).*

Ben. Ben is an African American realtor and father of three children, two boys and one girl. His oldest son is a rising 6th grader, his daughter is a rising 1st grader and his youngest son is a Pre-K student. All of Ben's children attend public school. When asked to define family engagement, Ben had this to say, "I think it's all about communicating and spending quality time, so you know each other. Like if I'm engaged with my family that means I'm in good standing with my family. I know what's going on with them, what goals and plans they have, things that concern them, concern me" (Ben's interview, 4/18/2020). When asked how family engagement was demonstrated Ben said, "family engagement is demonstrated by supporting each other, just being there for one another, working together, helping each other meet goals to be successful" (Ben's interview, 4/18/2020).

Ashley. Ashley is a Caucasian occupational therapist and mother of one daughter. Ashley's daughter attends Pre-K at a private school in her local community. When asked about family engagement, Ashley shared that she believed family engagement was about, "being there for your family, whatever they need, talking about things, planning things, and getting things done together" (Ashley's interview, 5/7/2020). Ashley also mentioned that while her work schedule was busy and did not afford her a lot of time to engage with family, she was happy to have access to technology and keep up with things concerning her daughter.

> *My husband has a flexible work schedule, so he usually takes our daughter to school and picks her up; that makes him the first point of contact for her teachers. My husband communicates with her teachers face to face a lot but, I more so use technology. I love the apps and blogs because even though I don't have a lot of time to come in during the school day I still feel a part of the classroom community and, I feel like I have*

a good relationship with her teacher as well. Anything going on in the class I can see;

pictures, videos, anything they need like supplies and, if I have any questions about

homework or anything else, I can message her teacher and she's really good about

answering back (Ashley's interview, 5/7/2020).

Ashely also alluded that technology while helpful could also be a barrier.

Sometimes it can be a bit overwhelming keeping up with all the different

programs and technology. They use different apps and systems for different things. I can

log in and see how she's doing in all these programs but, I have to remember all the

logins and where to go once I'm logged in. Sometimes I login and have to message her

teacher for help understanding how to read the graphs and data. Once I thought she was

failing and it was just the opposite, she was doing great. I work in the health field and I

see how people feel reading the information we give them because, it's simple for her

teacher but hard for me to understand until her teacher explains it to me (Ashley's

interview, 5/7/2020).

Research Question 1:

How do family members define and perceive family engagement?

When defining family engagement, participants spoke largely about communication.
They described communication between families and schools that was ongoing, purposeful, and
most importantly, two-way. Two-way communication is when both the family and school
personnel share the responsibility of communication. They also described the different topics

communication should be centered on. Participants also discussed the importance and need for diverse methods of communication- face to face, phone and technology.

Communication

Alice. Alice shared her belief that family engagement can only work when there is consistent and open communication.

> *I've partnered with several of my son's teachers and they all have their own style but, from what I can tell, family engagement only works when there is consistent and open communication; it can be by phone, email, text, blog, social media, whatever works for everyone as long as it's consistent and open. When the teacher and parent can share ideas, plan and partner together to do what's best for the students', I think that's true family engagement (Alice's interview, 5/1/2020).*

Nicole. Nicole felt very strongly about the connection between communication and family engagement.

> *I can't say this enough, communication, communication, communication. Communication with families, communication with teachers, communication with leaders, communication with the community and most importantly communication with students. Everyone communicating together, listening to each other because with communication comes relationship and understanding; relationship an understanding set the stage for change and impact (Nicole's interview, 5/14/2020).*

Ashley. Ashley spoke about how technology supported communication with teachers and encouraged relationship building.

My husband communicates with her teachers face to face a lot but, I more so use

technology. I love the apps and blogs because even though I don't have a lot of time to

come in during the school day I still feel a part of the classroom community and, I feel

like I have a good relationship with her teacher as well (Ashley's interview, 5/7/2020).

Chance. Chance also spoke about technology that supported communication and encouraged
relationship building.

I will say at the boys' school, they do a good job of engaging families through

social media and the other apps they use to communicate. I look forward to the

challenges they have us do as families to send in pictures and different things. It makes

me feel like they care about us not just about school stuff but outside of school as well. I

wish I could be more physically present, but I do feel connected through social media and

the apps. I definitely think it strengthens our school relationship as a family to be able to

communicate with teachers using technology (Chance's interview, 5/1/2020).

Lisa. Lisa believed that communication between teachers and families should revolve around
achievement and social behavior. "Teachers should communicate with families by phone, email
or newsletter to make sure parents are aware of how their child is doing in class, if they're
struggling with anything or, if they're doing great socially or academically" (Lisa's interview,
5/1/2020).

Lauren. Lauren believed that in addition to academics, communication should focus on
relationship building. "I think what's common among any demonstration of family engagement

is communicating and being in relationship, having trust, planning, trying new things, working together, and student success" (Lauren's interview, 5/7/2020).

Conclusion on communication.

Participants described communication that involved families and schools collaborating together by continually communicating. They also described communication between family and schools supported by technology that encourages all families to stay connected. Participants suggested communication between teachers and families should be centered on achievement and social behavior. They also believe that effective communication with families and stakeholders within the learning community not only supports communication but, builds trusting relationships between school, teachers and families. These diverse communication opportunities create student success and support relationship-building opportunities beyond the school walls that allow families to contribute and engage in the education of their child.

Involvement

Participants also shared about involvement when defining family engagement. Involvement described by families included the engagement of families in the instructional and noninstructional lives of their children. Several participants spoke about involvement and described activities such as attending school activities and performances, helping with homework, serving on PTAs, completing domestic tasks as a family, traveling together, and spending general time together as a family.

Lisa. Regarding involvement Lisa discussed, "It's important for families to attend activities planned by schools because when they don't attend them schools stop having them. If there are

no activities for families to get involved and connect with schools, it can be difficult for families and schools to engage and connect" (Lisa's interview, 5/1/2020).

Chance. According to Chance, "family engagement is being involved and doing things with your children in and out of school" (Chance's interview, 5/1/2020). Chance described activities such as traveling together, building and fixing things around the house, and helping with homework when exampling involvement.

Lori. Regarding involvement Lori shared, "It's important to me and my husband that our children know it doesn't take a lot of money to engage as a family and that it's really about spending time together, getting to know each other, communicating, and doing things together no matter the task" (Lori's interview, 4/18/2020) When describing being involved, Lori exampled activities such as helping with homework, attending school activities, communicating with teachers, completing domestic duties together and spending general time together.

Conclusion on involvement.

The participants above discussed different types of involvement. Lisa spoke about being involved by attending school-sponsored activities. She believed families attending school-sponsored activities supported families in building connection and engagement. Chance described involvement activities outside of school such as traveling together, completing home projects together and helping with homework. Lori detailed a combination of in school and at home involvement activities. She believed that the specific activity was less important when compared to the actual time spent being involved. Lori named a variety of involvement activities such as attending school events, completing domestic duties together, helping with homework

and spending time together as a family (singing, dancing, playing instruments). The
commonality with all participants was supporting their children. While some families focused
on supporting their children by engaging in cocurricular activities and others extracurricular
activities, each family's goal was to spend meaningful time with their child(ren) by engaging in
purposed activities.

<div align="center">**Research Question 2:**</div>

According to families, which school practices promote family engagement?

When answering this question families chose to reflect on the policies and practices in
place at their child's school that allow families to be an integral part within the academic lives of
their children. Participants shared a variety of cocurricular, extracurricular, and technology
involved practices that promote family engagement.

Cocurricular activities

Lori. Lori expressed that her children's school promoted family engagement by planning a wide
range of events and activities such as academic night, parent teacher conferences, student
performances, and PTA meetings. Lori also shared that these events help her feel supported as a
primary caregiver.

> *For me, the activities at the school make me feel less alone in providing a quality*
> *education for my children. When we go to academic night, I learn what they're doing in*
> *class and I feel empowered to better help them at home. I almost feel like me and the*
> *teacher are teaming together because I can better support what she's teaching in class. I*
> *also like parent-teacher conferences because I can discuss things concerning my child*

one-on-one. Any time I have with my children's teacher to discuss and plan what's best

for them, I love it. It makes me feel supported and less alone in setting them up for the

best unknown future (Lori's interview, 4/18/2020).

 Lisa. Lisa expressed how her children's school promoted family engagement by planning a

wide range of events and activities such as curriculum night, family conferences, student

performances and PTA meetings. Lisa believes it is important to participate in school-wide

activities so they can continue. "If parents don't attend events held by the school then they stop

having them, that makes it difficult for families to connect" (Lisa's interview, 5/1/2020). Lisa

also spoke about the benefit she sees from being involved with school activities and how parents

that are involved seem happier with the school, teachers, administration etc.

> *As an administrator I see a lot of parents and it's almost always obvious when*
>
> *speaking to parents who is involved versus not involved. Parents who are involved are*
>
> *happier with the school, teachers and, leaders. Parents who are not involved and don't*
>
> *attend events or stay in communication with school staff are usually less happy, they*
>
> *often complain and do a lot of finger pointing at staff and, they are rarely satisfied with*
>
> *school decisions made. They don't trust anything we do as a school community (Lisa's*
>
> *interview, 5/1/2020).*

Extracurricular activities

Alice. Alice spoke about events and activities such as movie night, dance parties, schoolwide

field trips, community events, festivals, and carnivals.

> *I love all the activities they have. It makes me feel like they care about all aspects*
>
> *of families and not just learning. Surely, they must be thinking about us simply spending*

time together and enjoying ourselves when they plan these activities. I think it also

makes learning more successful and fun by having all these activities. My children love

school, they think it's fun and I think they feel comfortable learning and trying their best

because of the welcoming environment. Me and my husband like it because we know they

feel comfortable and the events really are fun. Also, we feel welcomed at the school, all

my questions, suggestions etc. are always welcomed (Alice's interview, 5/1/2020).

Ben.   Ben shared that he looked forward to the events held at his children's school (father-
daughter dance, field trips, donuts with dad etc.).

Of all the events the father-daughter dance is my favorite. I love that time of

dancing and fun with my daughter and other dads, the field trips are fun too and I like

when they schedule for parents to have breakfast with the kids before work because lunch

is hard for me to make. I like the activities because I can see my kids in their element

with their friends bonding, having fun. I get to connect and talk with other dads and

families and, it kind of builds your community of people, resources and support.

Sometimes I contemplate going because I'm tired or busy with work but, every time I

make time to go, I'm always glad I did, and the kids have a great time (Ben's interview,

4/18/2020).

Communication with technology

Participants also spoke of communication using technology as a practice that promotes

family engagement. Technology allows teachers and families to consistently and conveniently

communicate and share information. Chance and Ashley spoke about the use of social media

and apps where they communicate with other families, teachers and leaders. Participants spoke with excitement in their voice when discussing these technology tools.

Chance. Chance shared, "...at my son's school, they do a good job of engaging families through social media and other apps they use to communicate. I look forward to the challenges they have us do as families to send in pictures and different things. I wish I could be more physically present, but I do feel connected through social media and the apps. I definitely think it strengthens our school relationship as a family to be able to communicate with teachers using technology" (Chance's interview, 5/1/2020).

Ashley.   Ashley believes technology increases partnership between home by making information and communication more accessible. Ashley shared, "I love the apps and blogs because even though I don't have a lot of time to come in during the school day I still feel a part of the classroom community and I feel like I have a good relationship with my daughter's teacher as well. Anything going on in the class I can see; pictures, videos, anything they need like supplies. If I have any questions about homework or anything else, I can message her teacher and she's really good about answering back" (Ashley's interview, 5/7/2020).

Conclusion of practices that promote family engagement

Schools employ various practices that promote family engagement including cocurricular activities, extracurricular activities and, communication with technology. While the type of activity varies from academic night to carnivals and use of social media apps, the outcome of involvement is the same. Participants revealed the outcome of involvement is, relationship-

building opportunities that support every family in substantially contributing to the education of their child.

Research Question 3:

According to family members, which school practices present barriers to family engagement?

When describing practices that present barriers to family engagement, time was mentioned by participants. Participants expressed that the time of events often interfered with the primary caregiver's work schedule. Participants also alluded that events were often promoted with little advance notice to schedule time off from work. Technology was also mentioned as a barrier. Participants discussed feeling overwhelmed using technology. Specifically, the shared about difficulty accessing information and understanding the information once accessed.

Chance. Chance described having to miss special school moments because of time conflicts. "Both of my boys have received awards and been a part of special ceremonies at school that I missed because it's during the day. They invite us to come and do things during work hours and, it's not easy to just take off last minute" (Chance's interview, 5/1/2020). Chance also alluded that the school has failed to give enough advance notice of events. "Sometimes they send a message, or a flyer home literally inviting you to something the next day. I don't know, maybe it slips their minds or, maybe they just don't consider how it's nearly impossible to take off the day before and attend an event midday" (Chance's interview, 5/1/2020).

Ashley. Ashley's experience with time being a barrier was similar to Chance. Ashley has been forced to miss important celebrations because of her work schedule. "My husband is able to go to most events held at school because he has a flexible work schedule. I do wish they held some

events on the weekend or evening. I guess that's asking for a lot of additional time for teachers

but maybe one or two events in the evening or weekend to make it convenient for families

wouldn't be asking for too much" (Ashley's interview, 5/7/2020)

Technology

Chance. Chance shared, "It took some getting use to all the technology, for a while it was kind

of bothersome. I thought a newsletter, or something sent home to read would be better because

remembering logins and where to click to find things was mind boggling at first" (Chance's

interview, 5/1/2020).

Ashley. Ashley described another issue of having multiple systems to learn and how it was at

times overwhelming. Ashley also spoke about difficulties understanding the information read

and being inundated with educational jargon. She explained,

> *It can be a bit overwhelming keeping up with all the different programs and*
>
> *technology. Remembering your login is a problem all in itself, then which program is for*
>
> *what and sometimes, I need to message the teacher for help understanding how to*
>
> *interpret the progress reports. Once I thought she was failing and it was just the*
>
> *opposite, she was doing great. I work in the health field and I see how people feel*
>
> *reading the information we give them. It's simple for her teacher but hard for me to*
>
> *understand until her teacher explains it to me (Ashley's interview, 5/7/2020).*

Conclusion of practices that are barriers to family engagement

Just as there are practices that promote family engagement, there are practices that are barriers to family engagement. Activities being held during the school day posed an inconvenience for the primary caregiver whose work schedule did not afford time off to be easily taken. Technology also stood in the way by creating feelings of stress. Families sometimes had difficulty logging in, locating information once logged and even understanding the information read. These practices stood in the way of families being able to fully contribute to the education of their child through engagement.

<div align="center">**Research Question 4:**</div>

What are the perceptions of families regarding their responsibility for communicating with teachers and being engaged as a family?

Participants spoke with confidence when sharing their responsibility in communicating and being engaged as a family. Families own and seem to emphasize the importance in the family's responsibility to initiate communication. Participants believe the communication should be centered on academic goals and the child's interests overall. They also shared how they demonstrated being engaged as a family by supporting the classroom teacher.

Communication responsibilities

Lisa. Lisa believes it is the responsibility of families to share the academic expectations they hold for their child with the teacher. "Parents know their child best so, it's important for parents to discuss with their child's teacher their strengths and weakness and even set goals for their child. A lot of times parents withhold information that can set the student and teacher up for success. I feel it's important for the teacher, student and parent to meet and discuss expectations,

goals and ways to be successful because while teachers know content, parents know the child best. Everyone needs to work together for true success" (Lisa's interview, 5/1/2020)

Lori. Lori also believes it is the responsibility of families to communicate academic expectations. She further believes it is the responsibility of families to communicate their child's interests and help the teacher get to know their child. Lori shared, "in addition to getting to know the child, getting to know the family and communicating about any major family change (marriage, divorce, relocation, new job, new baby etc.) is the responsibility of families" (Lori's interview, 4/18/2020) Lori further expressed her thoughts of the teacher being an extension of the family's support system by stating, "I believe it's important to arm the teacher with any information that will help better understand and support your child's overall growth. It takes a village; and the teacher is a major part of that village" (Lori's interview, 4/18/2020).

Engagement responsibilities

Regarding being engaged as a family, participants spoke about being present in the classroom and supporting the teacher. Families also discussed staying in close communication with teachers and staying current with what is happening at school.

School support

Alice. As a parent volunteer Alice saw the value in supporting classroom teachers.

> *I believe it's the responsibility of families to support classroom teachers. I think when families hear the word support, they immediately think going to the school to help but, there are other ways to support. If a parent can go to the school/classroom to help I think that's great but, it's not always necessary. I think the most important support is*

first asking the teacher what kind of support they need. That communication can get the

most beneficial support going. Every teacher doesn't need the same kind of help in the

classroom (Alice's interview, 5/1/2020).

Lori. Lori stays engaged by having daily conversations with her children after school.

> *My first point of contact is my children when it comes to school. Everday I take*
>
> *the time to ask them specific questions about their day to see how things went. If*
>
> *anything sounds a little odd or. I just feel the need to follow-up for information sake, I*
>
> *reach out to their teacher to see if there's anything further I need to know. I talk with my*
>
> *children first because it can be a bother to ask the teacher daily in-depth questions even*
>
> *though I want to know daily how things went in as much detail as possible. I'm asking to*
>
> *see if there's anything I need to do to help my kids or the class or, even the teacher*
>
> *(Lori's interview, 4/18/2020).*

Conclusion of communication and engagement responsibilities

Participants believe it is the responsibility of families to share the academic expectations

they hold for their child with the classroom teacher. They also believe it is the family's

responsibility to help the teacher get to know and build a relationship with their child. Regarding

engagement, participants spoke about being present in the classroom and supporting the teacher.

Families definition of support was not limited to face-to-face support. While family's value

being present in the classroom to help, they also believe support can be demonstrated however it

best serves the teacher and classroom (in and out of the classroom). Families suggested asking

the teacher how they can help to ensure they provide the most meaningful support. Families

believe support begins with communication between teachers and families on how families can

best support teachers.

Chapter 5

Discussions and Conclusions

The following section involves a discussion of the interview data. The one-on-one interviews give insight to how families define and perceive family engagement. Their rich descriptions provide detailed information that is extremely useful to the understanding of family engagement and its ability to support teachers, students, families, and schools. Through this analysis, it is evident that families, teachers and schools must communicate and collaborate to have family engagement success.

According to the families in this study, family engagement involves two-way communication that allows families and school personnel to collaborate, share their ideas and decision-making. Ashley provided an example of families and school personnel sharing ideas and decision-making when she shared,

> *Homework was starting to be a burden. It was taking a lot of time to complete and I personally didn't feel it was useful. Out of nowhere, the school put out a survey for families to see how homework was going at home. The survey was very detailed, how much homework, how little homework, how long should it take, what subjects etc. About a month later they shared the results and explained that the school was going to be homework free.* (Ashley's interview, 5/7/20).

Ashley's quote examples how schools can reach out to families to build two-way communication. The school reached out to families and asked them to share their ideas about homework by answering questions in a survey. The school then included the families' ideas

about homework to make the decision on how to move forward as a school regarding homework delivery.

Families also believe family engagement includes the involvement of curricular and extracurricular activities. While family's value cocurricular engagement such as volunteering in school, helping with homework and, attending parent teacher meetings; they also see the value in extracurricular engagement such as spending general quality time with their children outside of school. Lori shared,

> ..there are other times where we watch movies or, when we let the kids dance or tumble in the living room and my husband and I watch and rate them for fun. Other times we hop in the car and ride around in the field with my husband while he works, he's in real estate. We listen to music, talk and just learn more about each other's likes and interests. It's important to me and my husband that our children know that it doesn't take a lot of money to engage as a family and that it's really about spending time together, getting to know each other, communicating, and doing things together no matter the task (Lori's interview, 4/18/2020).

These examples of family engagement may not occur in school but, they are important to families and take much of the families' time. While educators are less likely to observe this involvement directly, it is likely they will see the results of these demonstrations. Anne Bowen (2013) described some of the benefits to these less obvious demonstrations of family engagement by describing the significant effects on the child's well-being, including better grades, improved mental health, and social competence. It is important for schools to recognize this type of

involvement from families. Families consider family engagement to involve spending general quality time with their children inside and outside of school.

Based on what was found, the data implicates that communication, relationship building, and diverse opportunities of family involvement are at the forefront of family engagement success.

All Stakeholders involved in Communication

Communication emerged as a theme when participants continually mentioned communication as they were defining and describing their perception of family engagement. What resonated throughout interviews and the data collected was an importance and need for effective, two-way communication, between families, teachers, students and leaders. Data from the interviews conclude that every participant in the school community has a role to play in achieving family engagement through communication. In Nicole's interview, she expressed strong feelings about the connection between communication and family engagement. "I can't say this enough, communication, communication, communication. Communication with families, communication with teachers, communication with leaders, communication with the community and most importantly communication with students" (Nicole's interview, 5/14/2020).

Alice shared a powerful moment where she was able to experience communication, collaboration and relationship building as a family with her child's teacher, the school's leader (Assistant Principal) and an academic coach. Alice shared,

> *With all the activities they have at my son's school and they have a lot, the*
> *one that made me fall in love is how they do conferences. The teacher invites the*

student and the parent to come in and we all get to sit down, look at his work,

reflect and set goals. I don't know if this was happenstance or a ritual but, when

we were having our conference the Assistant Principal popped in to say hello.

She asked how things were going and the conversation just took off from there.

We talked about how my son was doing in class, his work, his personality, his

interest, everything. It was nice to be in a classroom full of conversation about

what my child needed to be successful.

By the end of our meeting, we scheduled for him to possibly join the

science and writing team because those are his strengths. The Assistant Principal

was listening to his teacher and looking at some of his work and when she saw

how well he was doing, she asked him how he felt about joining the science and

writing team. First, I was impressed that she asked him and not me, it showed me

that his thoughts were important to her. His teacher didn't recommend him to

join the science and writing teams because technically he was too young. He was

in second grade and the teams were for third-fifth graders.

Anyway, the Assistant Principal called the academic coach to the

classroom because she is over both teams. She looked at his work, talked with

him about what the teams do and how she would love for him to join. We were all

so excited, it was a big deal. They asked us to go home, think about it and decide.

I already knew we were on board but still, I thought it was nice how they let us

discuss and decide; it felt like a big decision to him. He talked about it with his

dad when we got home and the next day, he went by himself to the Assistant

Principal's office and told her he wanted to join. Now he stops by the Assistant

Principal's office just to tell her about things he's doing in class.

I don't know if all of that would have happened without all of us kind of

chiming in about what type of student he is, how he learns and his interest. He

loves the science and writing teams too, I can really see the difference in his

excitement about school. He looks forward to his team meetings and the

opportunities they bring. He gets to travel and participate in state science and

writing competitions. They won 3rd place at the last science fair and the whole

school was so proud and cheering for them when they returned like they had won

1st place. It's been a great experience for us, him joining the teams and the

school overall. We love how they treat our family (Alice's interview, 5/1/2020).

As the researcher, it was apparent that family's value two-way communication. Communication is a clear overwhelming theme that presents itself as the focus for suggesting future implications for research and future interactions between families, teachers, students, and leaders. According to families, two-way communication that allows them to share ideas, decision making and build relationships with teachers is most valuable. Families also value communication that fits their lifestyle be it face to face or through school technology approved messaging and classroom apps. Ashley spoke to the value of two-way communication that fit her family's lifestyle.

I don't know what I'd do without the apps her teacher uses. With my

husband dropping off and picking up, he can talk to her teacher in person every

day. I'd be lost if she didn't use the apps because sometimes, he doesn't relay

information to me or, he may be thinking one thing and I have a completely different idea about something her teacher shared. That happens often with us, we're not always on the same page with school. It's nice for me to be able to communicate with the teacher directly using the apps so she can know what ideas I have about some things and not just dads.

With the apps I can message her teacher or check on her progress whenever it crosses my mind. I've literally messaged her teacher at 2am in the morning because I couldn't sleep and had time to login and look at her progress or, because something crossed my mind that I need her to know or want to know from her teacher. Like I said before, her teacher is pretty good about responding, she usually responds the same day (Ashley's interview, 5/7/2020).

Based on the research, school districts, leadership and teachers that encourage and support multiple ways to communicate and build relationships with families will have success engaging families. Families spoke to the value in communicating face to face as well as using school technology approved messaging and classroom apps. In order to have a meaningful conversation about communication, relationship building, school culture, and technology must also be considered.

Communication and research

Dr. Joyce Epstein and colleagues (2009) framework focuses on six types of family involvement necessary for successful family-school partnerships. The second type of involvement is communication. Epstein (2009) shares that communication focuses on providing

information about school programs and student academic success; it also focuses on ensuring

that two-way communication exists between home and school. The interview data from

participants supports Epstein's importance of communication focusing on students' academic

strengths, weakness and goals. However, based on what was found, the data also implicates that

families believe communication does not stop at focusing on children's academic success;

participants also spoke about communicating to build relationships within the academic and

outside the academic learning environment. For example, Chance shared,

> *I will say at the boys' school, they do a good job of engaging families through*
>
> *social media and the other apps they use to communicate. I look forward to the*
>
> *challenges they have us do as families to send in pictures and different things. It makes*
>
> *me feel like they care about us not just about school stuff but outside of school as well. I*
>
> *wish I could be more physically present, but I do feel connected through social media and*
>
> *the apps. I definitely think it strengthens our school relationship as a family to be able to*
>
> *communicate with teachers using technology (Chance's interview, 5/1/2020).*

Nicole shared in her interview, "...everyone communicating together, listening to each other

because with communication comes relationship and understanding; relationship an

understanding set the stage for change and impact" (Nicole's interview, 5/14/2020).

Communication and building relationships

Relationships between families and the schools that their children attend can consist of

many different and connected parts. "It is impossible to think that teachers' can create

meaningful relationships with the students they teach, yet not create the very same relationship

with their students' families (Grant, 2016)." Participants like Lori spoke about the importance of communicating and arming teachers with any information that will help better understand and support a child's overall growth. Lori shared an adage that sums up her thoughts, "it takes a village to raise a child". Lori wholeheartedly believes that "teachers and school staff are part of that village" (Lori's interview, 4/18/20).

"Educators instinctively know that relationships are important but struggle to figure out ways to actually makes these relationships really work" (Henderson, 2002). As a teacher leader, I believe the first step to building relationships is communicating and assuring families that together, we can improve the success for their child. One way to do this is by scheduling a family conference similar to what Alice shared, "the teacher invites the student and the family to come in and we all get to sit down, look at his work, reflect and set goals." Teachers and school staff must see families as partners in order to build relationships. Partners, regardless of their circumstance know that they each bring something valuable to the table. This partnership looks like families and school personnel communicating to share ideas, sharing decision-making, and looking for opportunities to support one another meaningfully. Alice spoke to this in her one-on-one interview, "from what I can tell, family engagement only works when there is consistent and open communication. When the teacher and parent can share ideas, plan and partner together to do what's best for the students', I think that's true family engagement" (Alice's interview, 5/1/2020).

Communication and technology

While not a replacement for human engagement, technology, and the growing interest in social media can play an important role in extending the efforts of school personnel to engage all

families (Constantino, 2016). Based on what was found, the data implicates that families value the enhancement of communication and building relationships using technology and social media. Afterall, teachers that use technology to communicate are encouraging and supporting family engagement through communication. Ashley describes below her experience with communication using technology,

> *My husband communicates with her teachers face to face a lot but, I more so use technology. I love the apps and blogs because even though I don't have a lot of time to come in during the school day I still feel a part of the classroom community and, I feel like I have a good relationship with her teacher as well (Ashley's interview, 5/7/2020).*

Chance discussed similar views on communication and technology,
> *I will say at the boys' school, they do a good job of engaging families through social media and the other apps they use to communicate. I look forward to the challenges they have us do as families to send in pictures and different things... I wish I could be more physically present, but I do feel connected through social media and the apps. I definitely think it strengthens our school relationship as a family to be able to communicate with teachers using technology (Chance's interview, 5/1/2020).*

Based on what was found, the data supports technology being a nearly necessary tool for communication. Millions of people spend a portion of their day in the world of technology and social networking (Constantino, 2016). It is easy to understand the benefits of school districts, leaders and teachers using technology and social media to improve communication with families.

Providing technology to support communication and family engagement overall enhances the likelihood that families will become better informed about their child's progress and, increases the likelihood of schools establishing and building more positive relationships (Constantino, 2003).

Summary

By communicating and building relationships with families, teachers have a unique opportunity to impact the family and child simultaneously and increase support. Families bring great skills, talents, experiences and strengths to the school. By establishing relationships and two-way communication just as the participants in this study speak about, it is likely that families will look for ways to partner and support just as Alice and Lori discussed. Alice shared,

> *I think the most important support is first asking the teacher what kind of support they need. That communication can get the most beneficial support going. Every teacher doesn't need the same kind of help in the classroom (Alice's interview, 5/1/2020). Lori explained,*

Lori discussed,

> *I talk with my children first because it can be a bother to ask the teacher daily in-depth questions even though I want to know daily how things went in as much detail as possible. I'm asking to see if there's anything I need to do to help my kids or the class or, even the teacher (Lori's interview, 4/18/2020)*

Communication and developing relationships may take some creativity, flexibility, and use of technology but, it is well worth it and a job that teachers do not have to do alone. The data

clearly shows families are willing to contribute their skills in meaningful ways that add value to their local school and support. Henderson (2007) makes the following point about communication and school-family relationships: "When school staff communicate and construct caring and trustful relationships with families, treating families as partners in their children's education, families are far more likely to become involved and stay involved" (p.47).

Involvement

Diverse opportunities for involvement emerged as a theme when participants discussed involvement as they defined family engagement and ways to demonstrate family engagement. What resonated throughout interviews and the data collected was an importance and need for involvement. Involvement was the most varied theme and topic because families described many ways of being involved as discussed below.

Involvement and research

Dr. Joyce Epstein and colleagues (2009) framework focuses on six types of family involvement necessary for successful family-school partnerships. The interview data supports Epstein's (2009) focus on the importance of family involvement. However, based on what was found, the data also implicates that families believe involvement is not just centered around cocurricular activities; participants also spoke to the value of extracurricular activities when discussing involvement. Families mentioned traditional ways of involvement highlighted by Epstein (2009); volunteering at school, helping with homework, attending conferences and other curriculum related activities. Nevertheless, participants also spoke about extracurricular

activities (traveling together, carnivals, sporting events etc.) and the impact they had on their family. For example, Alice explained,

> *I love all the activities they have (carnivals, school wide field trips, movie on the lawn etc.). It makes me feel like they care about all aspects of families and not just learning. I think it also makes learning more successful and fun by having all these activities. My children love school, they think it's fun and I think they feel comfortable learning and trying their best because of the welcoming environment (Alice's interview, 5/1/2020).*

Chance had this to say about being involved, "family engagement is being involved and doing things with your children in and out of school" (Chance's interview, 5/1/2020). Chance went on to describe activities such as traveling together, coaching and attending his son's baseball games, building and fixing things around the house together, working out together, and helping with homework.

Demonstrations of diverse involvement

While there are families who are eager to communicate and involve themselves with teachers and school staff face to face, using school technology apps and attending school sponsored activities, there are others who for differing reasons are apprehensive to get involved and build relationships with teachers and school staff. In my experience, these families are often labeled by teachers and school staff as disengaged.

Families are often labeled disengaged because of teachers' and school staff perceptions of what an engaged family looks like. What stakeholders believe about family engagement plays a

role in how they encourage and support family engagement (Constantino, 2003). As a teacher

leader, I can speak to family engagement being perceived as direct involvement (volunteering in

school and face to face communication with teachers). Based on the data, the labels sometimes

given by teachers are dismissive of the types of family engagement valued by families.   For

example, teachers may label families as disengaged when they do not attend school sponsored

activities or meetings. However, the data shows that families are likely engaging in a preferred

activity outside of school and having their own family meetings. For example, Lori discussed,

> *...there are times where we watch movies, let the kids dance or tumble in the*
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> *living room and my husband and I watch and rate them for fun. Other times we*
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> *hop in the car, ride around and listen to music, talk and just learn more about*
>
> *each other's likes and interests. It's important to me and my husband that our*
>
> *children know that it doesn't take a lot of money to engage as a family and that*
>
> *it's about spending time together, getting to know each other, communicating,*
>
> *and doing things together no matter the task (Lori's interview, 4/18/2020).*

Families often do not match the label of being disengaged assigned to them by teachers

and school staff. When an individual has a limited understanding regarding family engagement,

many families will be mislabeled as disengaged. Teachers and school staff must broaden their

definition of family engagement to include both obvious (inside of school) and less obvious

(outside of school) types of engagement mentioned by families such as, having goal setting

conversations and, daily communication check-ins to find ways to support the student, teacher,

or class.

It is vital that teachers and school staff reserve judgement on how families support in their children's education. Instead, stakeholders should focus on promoting ways to empower families to even better contribute to their child's education in ways that support student success. In my over 10 years of teaching students, I have come across many different families from various backgrounds (religion, race, ethnicity, family status, socio-economic status etc.). In all my years, with all their differences, I have yet to meet a family that did not genuinely care for their child(ren). Based on the data, much of the family engagement valued by families occurs outside of school. Teachers and school staff must broaden their belief of family engagement in order to recognize and appreciate the engagement families bring to the partnership.

When participants discussed how they demonstrate family engagement, they often mentioned activities and time spent outside of school with their children. Simply put, families can engage without being face to face with teachers. Based on the data, families choose to engage in various ways that support their children through cocurricular and extracurricular activities. According to Chance, "family engagement is being involved and doing things with your children in and out of school" (Chance's interview, 5/1/2020). Chance described activities such as traveling together, building and fixing things around the house, and helping with homework when exampling involvement.

Regarding family engagement Ben explained, "I think it's all about communicating and spending quality time, so you know each other. Like if I'm engaged with my family that means I'm in good standing with my family. I know what's going on with them, what goals and plans they have, things that concern them, concern me" (Ben's interview, 4/18/2020). Ben later explained, "family engagement is demonstrated by supporting each other, just being there for

one another, working together, helping each other meet goals to be successful" (Ben's interview, 4/18/2020).

Ben's statement alludes that all stakeholders can support in the goal of family engagement. Not only can families support family engagement in school's by volunteering, helping with homework and communicating with stakeholders; schools can also support family home culture and build family engagement at home. Ashley discussed how schools can support family engagement at home when she shared,

> *Homework was starting to be a burden. It was taking a lot of time to complete and I personally didn't feel it was useful. Out of nowhere, the school put out a survey for families to see how homework was going at home. The survey was very detailed, how much homework, how little homework, how long should it take, what subjects etc. About a month later they shared the results and explained that the school was going to be homework free. I was shocked!*

> *I was relieved I obviously wasn't the only parent that felt that way but, I was also a little nervous about what our evenings would look like without spending hours doing homework. Instead, they provided a lot of websites and books for the students to read if the families wanted the students to work on something. They said they wanted us to make better use of our time as a family. It turned out to work great for us, now I can take her to dance class, swim and just spend more quality time. We can have dinner and get to bed on time without all the tears from doing homework. It helped our family in the evening a lot. (Ashley's interview, 5/7/20)*

Summary on diverse involvement

As a teacher I can speak to the idea's educators hold about engagement being obvious and centered around school involvement (participating in social events, attending parent teacher conferences, PTA meetings etc.). Based on what was found, the data implicates that family's also value less obvious demonstrations of engagement (quality time spent with children, goal setting, help with homework and communication check-ins with children). These examples of family engagement may not occur in the school but, they are important to families and take much of the families' time. While educators are less likely to observe this involvement directly, it is likely they will see the results of these demonstrations. Anne Bowen (2013) described some of the benefits to these less obvious demonstrations of family engagement by describing the significant effects on the child's well-being, including better grades, improved mental health, and social competence.

As a teacher leader, I have found it to be wise to acknowledge all types of support/involvement from families. Families that choose to engage outside of the school cannot be labeled as any less engaged than those families who engage in the school building. Any type of involvement from families is in support of the school and classroom goal, student success. Involvement cannot be limited to inside the school building. Teachers and school personnel must see the value in the support children do receive and not take it for granted. Afterall, true involvement of families includes the engagement of families in the instructional and non-instructional lives of their children (Constantino, 2003).

Limitations of findings

The limitations of the study were a small sample of participants and time. The researcher's only participants were primary caregivers with professional working experience. This study did not investigate all of the diverse types of families that exist. This study only interviewed professional working families of elementary children. As the researcher, I would like to see this study progress to involving the perceptions of students, school leaders, teachers and more diverse types of families to compare their beliefs and develop an even broader understanding of family engagement. With an increased number of participants, it may also be useful to explore quantitative research methods.

Implications for Practice

A significant implication of this research is the need for shared communication, collaboration, and decision making amongst stakeholders regarding family engagement. To share this research and data with schools, leaders, teachers, and families would strongly support them in their role of family engagement. Stakeholders could use this research to better understand the complexities of family engagement and its ability to support each other. Based on the data, the following suggestions are being shared to increase stakeholder's awareness and support of family engagement.

Implications for School Districts role in family engagement

School districts often have high standards and expectations for students and teachers but rarely mention standards and expectations for family engagement. Based on the research, family

engagement is too large of a task for teachers to tackle on their own. Research strongly suggests

for family engagement ideals to be passed down from leadership.

Any school district has the potential to create strong family engagement ideals by

following The National Association for Family, School and Community Engagement (NAFSCE)

formula for success. The NAFSCE is the first membership association focused solely on

advancing family, school, and community engagement. The association has adopted the

following definition for family engagement,

> *family engagement is a shared responsibility in which schools and other*
>
> *community agencies and organizations are committed to reaching out to engage*
>
> *families in meaningful ways and in which families are committed to actively*
>
> *supporting their children's learning and development (National Association for*
>
> *Family, School and Community Engagement (NAFSCE), 2020).*

If family engagement is going to be a reality, school districts must create attainable and

measurable goals for engaging families in the educational lives of their children. School districts

must also subscribe to the belief that two-way communication, collaboration, and relationship

building with families are essential for school and student success. School districts subscribing

to these beliefs will make a bold statement and further support the engagement of families.

Lastly, school districts must communicate and immerse all stakeholders in their plan of

family engagement to ensure they remain a priority that is continually implemented. With

continual and proper implementation of a plan, family engagement of all families will be

strongly supported in every aspect of the school. Nevertheless, as with any other school plan,

school districts must remain committed financially. School districts must also be willing to invest in local school plans of family engagement programming just as they do with instructional programming.

Implications for Schools role in family engagement

School and culture

Local school communities must first create a culture that engages every family. The Southwestern Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) defines culture as the attitudes and beliefs of those inside the school environment and outside the school, or external environment. Attitudes and beliefs are core issues in the success of family engagement at any school. Leaders, teachers, school staff and other stakeholders must share collective beliefs and explicitly embrace the idea that families are partners for family engagement to be a success.

Alice's example of the family conference during her one-on-one interview is an example where all members of the school community embraced the idea of partnering together for student success. Each stakeholder, (leader, teacher and, coach) served the family with an attitude that clearly valued communication, collaboration, and true partnership with a goal of student success. The stakeholder's attitudes, actions and support of the family made Alice "fall in love," with their school culture.

School and support

Schools also have the responsibility of supporting teachers and families in understanding how they can contribute to children's education through engagement. Family engagement is too critical of a task to leave in the hands of teachers and families alone. Schools must collaborate

with teachers and families to continually ensure they are well equipped with time and other

resources to support communication, collaboration, and relationship building with families. If

schools take on the role of cheerleaders for teachers and families, true family engagement can be

achieved.

An example of schools supporting family engagement is when Ashley described how her

child's school surveyed families to see how homework was going at home. With the results, the

school decided to eliminate homework and instead suggested websites and books for children to

activate their learning *if,* the families wanted work for their children to complete at home. This

schoolwide change allowed families to share their ideas, share the role in decision making and

the result was families being afforded more time to spend together. Surely this decision also

afforded teachers more time to plan and focus on other important instructional tasks. This is an

example of how schools can advocate for teachers, families, and true family engagement.

Practices

In addition to supporting teachers and creating a culture that is conducive to family

engagement, schools must implement practices and consistent communication within the school

to fully promote and support family engagement. Schools have a duty to include practices that

promote family engagement. These practices will encourage opportunities for interaction

because, the best type of family engagement focuses on as many opportunities as possible for

families and schools to interact on behalf of all students (Constantino, 2003). Communication is

a key practice that supports family engagement. Schools must share the responsibility of

communication by reaching out to families for family engagement. School leaders and teachers

can assist in reaching out to families to build culture and family engagement. Other practices

can include, scheduling family conferences (primary caregiver and child included) during non-school hours, hosting community activities outside of school, encouraging opportunities to volunteer, continually surveying families to assess and include their ideas, promoting frequent communication between teacher and family and, communicating information using multiple means (phone, blog, website, email, school apps) so information and opportunities to share ideas are accessible to all families.

It is important that schools provide multiple ways for families to communicate (face to face, phone, email, blogs, school approved apps, surveys etc.). It goes without saying that technology can greatly enhance communication. Families spoke highly to the benefits of using technology to communicate, engage, and even build relationships with teachers. In today's technology driven world, it is important that schools embrace appropriate technologies as a venue for communication. Schools also have a responsibility to make certain that families are comfortable using the technology tools to communicate, engage, and build relationships. Ashley alluded how technology while helpful could also be a barrier if families are not comfortable.

Sometimes it can be a bit overwhelming keeping up with all the different programs and technology. They use different apps and systems for different things. I can log in and see how she's doing in all these programs but, I have to remember all the logins and where to go once I'm logged in. Sometimes I login and have to message her teacher for help understanding how to read the graphs and data. Once I thought she was failing and it was just the opposite, she was doing great (Ashley's interview, 5/7/2020).

When schools understand and nurture effective communication and relationships with all

families, tremendous dividends are paid in the form of achievement for every student (Mapp, K.,

2003).

Implications for teacher leader's role in family engagement

An important part of development as a teacher leader is knowing how to collaborate

genuinely and effectively with students' families. Research has shown that the most effective

teacher leaders and schools are those with strong family engagement (Henderson & Mapp,

2002). Teacher leaders have a responsibility to lead within and beyond the classroom by

modeling school district and local school goals. Teacher leaders must also embrace family

engagement practices and contribute to the community of teachers, learners, and leaders by

building relationships. With teacher leaders' influence, other teachers will likely improve family

engagement practices which will likely improve their educational practice. Teacher leaders must

share the responsibility for achieving family engagement outcomes delegated by the school

district and local school leadership.

Implications for teacher's role in family engagement

Teachers have a direct line of communication with families. It is important for teachers

to be open to communicating with families and creating opportunities for families to contribute

to their child's education. A healthy partnership between teachers and families is important to

the student, teacher, and overall family success. This partnership begins with frequent two-way

communication between the teacher and family. As a fourth time higher education student, I am

aware that some teacher preparation programs do not highlight communication with families.

This may explain why some teachers do not take full advantage of the partnerships in families by promoting communication with all families. Nevertheless, teachers must be willing to see families as partners and know that they each bring something valuable to the table.

While teachers may have exceptional knowledge in the practice of teaching, families know their child(ren) best and can arm the teacher with information to increase student success. Lori shared an adage that sums up her thoughts on teachers and families working together, "it takes a village to raise a child". Lori wholeheartedly believes that "teachers and school staff are part of that village" (Lori's interview, 4/18/20). If teachers communicate, collaborate, and look for opportunities to meaningfully support families, family engagement will be a success. Some examples of supporting families are, inviting families (primary caregiver and child) to conferences, supporting families in setting goals for children or, surveying families to see how they prefer to communicate or, surveying families and allowing them to have input in the classroom.

Implications for family's role in family engagement

It is so very important for families to be aware and open to communicate, collaborate and build relationships with teachers and schools. When families create this partnership with stakeholders, they ensure they can fully contribute to their child's education. Families must understand the value they bring to the school community. Informing research argues that schools will be successful only to the degree that they are successful in engaging families (Mertens, S. & Anfara, V., 2008); research further states that without family support and active participation, students will not achieve at acceptable levels (Mertens, S. & Anfara, V., 2008, p.58).

Families must engage in the school community and make themselves aware of all the different types of involvement (in and outside of school). When families engage with their children and schools by involving themselves in opportunities to communicate and collaborate, they are fully in support of the district, school and family goal of student success.

Families can engage by introducing their family to their child's teacher and sharing information to help the teacher get to know their family and, what goals they have for their child(ren). Families can also initiate dialogue with stakeholders to see how things are going and, stay informed of any ways they can support, share ideas and decision making. Families can also communicate with their child(ren) about their school day and listen for ways they can support their class, teacher or child. Family engagement can also be achieved by simply being present and involved (in and out of school). True comprehensive involvement of families must include the engagement of families in the instructional and non-instructional lives of their children.

Implications for Future Research

A recommendation for research is to continue this research with teachers and students. Interviews with students and teachers will yield interesting results that would benefit all stakeholders. While completing this research, I developed several questions about teachers' and students' perceptions of family engagement. Additional questions that emerged from this research include the following: 1) How do teachers define family engagement? 2) How do student's define family engagement 3) What are the perceptions of teachers regarding their responsibility for communicating with families and being engaged as a teacher? According to students, which school practices promote family engagement? According to teachers which school practices promote family engagement?

Conclusion

Families shape the minds of students and lay the foundation for student success. Failure to engage families in the process of their child's education is to deprive students of reaching their full potential. As I set out to research family engagement, I committed to broadening the definition of what it means to be engaged as a family. I further committed to challenging participants and readers to deeply reflect on family engagement beliefs and help them identify attitudes that will promote effective family collaboration practices that benefit teachers, families and most importantly, students.

Another goal was to involve families' beliefs about family engagement as a source of information in the school community. The findings of this research indicate that valuable information can be discovered by examining family perceptions of family engagement. Based on the data, family's perceptions support Dr. Joyce Epstein's Six Types of Family Engagement Framework. According to families, communication and relationships between school and family are critical to families and family engagement success. Families also believe *all* stakeholders have a responsibility to support families so the family can in return, support their student. Lastly, families expect a range of low to high levels of engagement based on the NAFSCEs definition. They enjoy participatory activities, discussing academic goals and collaborating with teachers. Families bring great skills, talents, experiences and strengths to the school. It is my hope that because of this research teachers and schools will be open to communicating with families and creating opportunities for families to communicate and contribute to their child's education through collaboration.

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Appendix A

<u>Interview Protocol</u>

Welcome and thank you for your participation today. My name is Candis Ervin and I am a graduate student at Kennesaw State University conducting research. This interview will take 20-30 minutes and will include questions regarding family engagement. Specifically, what it means to be engaged as a family. I will audio record this interview so I may accurately document the information you convey. If at any time during the interview you wish to discontinue the use of the recorder or the interview itself, please feel free to let me know and we will stop. All of your responses are confidential. Your responses will remain confidential and will be used only for educational purposes.

At this time, I would like to ask for your verbal and signed consent and, also inform you that your participation in this interview also implies your consent. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. If at any time you need to stop, take a break, or return to a question, please let me know. You may also withdraw your participation at any time without consequence. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin? Then with your permission and signed consent we will begin the interview.

1. What is your gender?
2. What is your ethnicity?
3. What is your occupation?
4. What region of the United States do you reside? (N, S, E,W, NE, SE, SW, NW)
5. What is your role in the family?
6. How many children do you have in your family?
7. Is your child in a public school, private school or, home school?
8. What grade are your children in?
9. How do you define family engagement?
10. How do you think teachers demonstrate family engagement?
11. How do you think families demonstrate family engagement?
12. Which school practices do you feel promote family engagement?
13. Which school practices do you feel present barriers to family engagement?
14. What do you believe are the responsibilities of teachers for communicating with families and engaging families?
15. What do you believe are the responsibilities of families regarding communicating with teachers and being engaged as a family?

16. What are the similarities and differences of family engagement and parental involvement?

17. What do you feel teachers should know about family engagement?

18. What do you feel families should know about family engagement?

19. What are some of the needs or areas of support that teachers could use to increase family engagement?

20. What are some of the needs or areas of support that families could use to increase family engagement?

21. What are some ways to actively involve students, teachers and parents within the school?

22. Do you think that it is important for teachers and families to connect, communicate or engage? Why or Why not?

23. Is there any additional information you would like to share regarding family engagement?

Thank the participant for their participation.

Appendix B

<u>Consent Letter</u>

STUDY #20-479

TITLE OF STUDY

Family Engagement: Family Perceptions

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Candis Ervin

Bagwell College of Education Graduate Student

Kennesaw State University

cervin7@students.kennesaw.edu

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is to learn how families define family engagement. The goal is to better understand what participants truly believe about family engagement and the aspects they see as important. Challenging participants and educators to deeply reflect on family engagement beliefs will help identify attitudes that will promote effective family collaboration practices that benefit teachers, families and most importantly, students.

You are being asked to help with this purpose through the participation in this research study. It is your decision to participate in this study and I would like for you to know what this research will involve and why it is being done. It is recommended that you read the following information. Please feel free to ask questions at any time. Also, know that you may stop your participation at any time, or you may refuse to respond to any questions. All information regarding your participation will be kept confidential.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION
Your participation in this study is voluntary. This study will take about 30 minutes of your time. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign this consent letter. Even after you sign this consent letter, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Withdrawing from this study will not affect the relationship you have, if any, with the researcher or your school, or your school district. If you wish to withdraw from the study after beginning the interview, please feel free to let me know and we will stop. Your responses will remain confidential and will be used for educational purposes only. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in the study.

If you agree to participate in this study, I will ask you to sign this letter and scan or e-mail this letter back to me. You may return the signed consent letter to the following e-mail address cervin7@students.kennesaw.edu.

At this time, I would like to ask for your verbal and signed consent and inform you that your participation in this interview also implies your consent. If at any time you need to stop, take a break, or return to a question, please let me know. You may also withdraw your participation at any time without consequence. Once I receive your signed consent letter, I will contact you to schedule an interview with you through video conference or phone. All information obtained from the interview will be kept confidential. Please know that I may not schedule an interview with you without receiving your signed consent letter.

STUDY PROCEDURES
If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked a total of 23 questions. You are asked to respond to the questions to the best of your knowledge. You may refuse to respond to any question, and you may stop responding to the questions at any time if you wish.

RISKS

There are no known risks for participating in this study. The only known risk or inconvenience is the amount of time needed to respond to the questions.

BENEFITS
Your participation in this study is beneficial to better understanding what it means to be engaged as a family. Although there are no known benefits to you directly, your contribution will better assist the researcher in developing genuine and effective collaboration practices that support family engagement. Also, your responses will also build the knowledge of what teachers need to know to better support families and students.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your identity and responses to the interview questions will be anonymous. In addition, every effort will be made by the researcher to maintain confidentiality including:

1. All interviews are assigned code numbers and will be used on all research notes, documents and data analysis procedures. Assigning code names/numbers for participants that will be used on all research notes and documents

2. All information and data will be kept in a personal locked file cabinet owned by the researcher.

CONTACT INFORMATION
If you have any questions regarding this study, please know that you may contact the researcher, Candis Noel Ervin at cervin7@students.kennesaw.edu

CONSENT
I have read and I understand the provided information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without any negative effect. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature *Candis Noel Ervin*_____ Date 3/27/20__

Research at Kennesaw State University that involves human participants is carried out under the oversight of an Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding these activities should be addressed to the Institutional Review Board, Kennesaw State University, 585 Cobb Avenue, KH3417, Kennesaw, GA 30144-5591, (470) 578-6407

Appendix C

IRB Documentation

From: irb@kennesaw.edu <irb@kennesaw.edu>
Sent: Friday, March 27, 2020 10:47 AM
To: candiservin@gmail.com <candiservin@gmail.com>
Cc: irb <irb@kennesaw.edu>; Raynice Jean-Sigur <rjeansig@kennesaw.edu>
Subject: Study 20-479: Family Engagement: Family Perceptions

3/27/2020

Candis Noel Ervin, Student
College of Education: Teacher Leadership

RE: Your follow-up submission of 3/27/2020, Study #20-479: Family Engagement: Family
Perceptions

Hello Ms. Ervin,

Your application for the new study listed above has been administratively reviewed. This study
qualifies as exempt from continuing review under DHHS (OHRP) Title 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2) -
Educational tests, surveys, interviews, observations of public behavior. The consent procedures
described in your application are in effect. You are free to conduct your study.

COVID-19 REQUIREMENTS: You may only conduct interviews via phone, teleconferencing, or
online platforms, no contact between the researcher and the participants is permitted under any
circumstance.

NOTE: All surveys, recruitment flyers/emails, and consent forms must include the IRB study
number noted above, prominently displayed on the first page of all materials.

Please note that all proposed revisions to an exempt study require submission of a Progress
Report and IRB review prior to implementation to ensure that the study continues to fall within
an exempted category of research. A copy of revised documents with a description of planned
changes should be submitted to irb@kennesaw.edu for review and approval by the IRB.

Please submit a Progress Report to close the study once it is complete.

Thank you for keeping the board informed of your activities. Contact the IRB at irb@kennesaw.edu or at (470) 578-6407 if you have any questions or require further information.

Sincerely,

Christine Ziegler, Ph.D.
KSU Institutional Review Board, Director of Human Subjects Research

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPLICATION

Review the IRB website for information about what type of IRB review applies to your study

(https://research.kennesaw.edu/irb/review-classifications.php)

Review type:

_**X**_Check here for a Request for Exemption

___Check here for an Expedited Review [IRB Reviewers may recommend a Full Board Review]

Status of Primary Investigator:

___Faculty   ___Staff   _**X**_Student

<u>Students as the Primary Investigator (PI) and their Faculty Advisors</u>

Students (graduate and undergraduate) must have a faculty advisor complete the last page of this form and submit all documents from the faculty advisor's KSU email address. Students must also use their KSU email address in all IRB correspondence.

By submitting this form, you agree that you have read <u>KSU's Federal-wide Assurance of Compliance</u> and agree to provide for the protection of the rights and welfare of your research participants as outlined in the Assurance. You also agree to submit any significant changes in the procedures of your project to the IRB for prior approval and agree to report to the IRB any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to subjects or others.

Title of Research

Family Engagement: Family Perceptions

Start Date is date of IRB approval   *Proposed start date*: 03/30/2020

***The official start date for research is the date the IRB approval letter is issued. Research activities may not begin prior to final IRB approval. Studies should be submitted well in advance of the proposed start date to allow for processing, review, and approval. If you have not received a letter from the IRB in 10 business days of submission, please call or email requesting status update.**

Is your research being funded in any way? ___Yes*_**X**_ No

*Where is the funding coming from? [Name of Federal Agency/Foundation/Department]

If you have obtained funding, please submit your award documentation along with this application.

Primary Investigator

All IRB correspondence goes only to the primary investigator (PI) and advisors are copied on student projects.

Candis Noel Ervin

Name:

Department:

College of Education: Teacher Leadership

Telephone: Email:

770-658-0288; cervin7@students.kennesaw.edu

FOR RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY STUDENTS AS THE PRIMARY INVESTIGATOR, GO TO THE LAST PAGE OF THE APPLICATION FORM TO ENTER REQUIRED FACULTY ADVISOR INFORMATION.

Co-Investigator(s) who are faculty, staff, or students at KSU

Name: _____Faculty

Email: _____Staff

_____Student

Name: _____Faculty

Email: _____Staff

_____Student

Name: _____Faculty

Email: _____Staff

_____Student

Additional Names (include status and
email):

**Co-Investigator(s) who are NOT employees or students at KSU:
Please submit your human participants training certificate with
application materials.**

Name:

Email:

Home Institution:

Name:

Email:

Home Institution:

Additional Names (include email and home institution):

*ALL researchers listed on this application MUST have completed CITI training
BEFORE an IRB Approval will be provided.*

Visit http://research.kennesaw.edu/irb/citi-training.php for additional information about
CITI training, how to choose the right course, and how to create a profile. ALL KSU
faculty/staff/students MUST use their KSU provided email address on all
correspondence.

**NOTE: It is each researcher's responsibility to ensure that the CITI Certificate
does not expire during the course of the approved study. Failure to maintain a
current certificate will invalidate your approval. Please use your KSU email
address on your CITI profile and make sure your profile name matches the one
provided above.**

Does your research involve minors? ___Yes_**X**_No

See item number 5 below for parental consent and minor assent information. See
http://research.kennesaw.edu/irb/consent-templates.php for forms and information.

Will this research involve COLLABORATION with ANOTHER INSTITUTION?

___Yes_**X**_No, go to question 1

If yes, provide the name of the Institution _____

Has the other Institution conducted an IRB review of the study?

___No___Yes – Send that review with this approval form to the KSU IRB.

1.Prior Research

Have you submitted research on this topic to the KSU IRB previously? ___Yes* _**X**_ No

*If yes, list the date, title, name of investigator, and study number:

N/A

See http://research.kennesaw.edu/irb/application-tips.php for detailed explanations of
questions 2-8. Provide complete sentences with sufficient information for an IRB review.

2. Description of Research

    a. Purpose of and anticipated findings for this study:

The purpose of this study is to learn how families define family engagement. The goal is to
better understand what participants truly believe about family engagement and the aspects they
see as important. Challenging participants to deeply reflect on family engagement beliefs will
help identify attitudes that will promote effective family collaboration practices that benefit
teachers, families and most importantly, students.

b. Nature of data to be collected (interview (includes focus groups), online or hardcopy survey, observations, experimental procedures, etc.):

In keeping with social distancing, data will be collected through interviews with family members via video conferencing or telephone. An analysis of data will include a system of coding to link thoughts across data after reviewing, reflecting, and transcribing interviews. All interviews are assigned code numbers and will be used on all research notes, documents and data analysis procedures. Assigning code names/numbers for participants that will be used on all research notes and documents.

c. Data collection procedures: (include information on how consent will be obtained, how links will be provided, where interviews will be conducted, audio or video taping, etc.). Note: student email addresses are FERPA protected. Student email addresses, grades, or work cannot be collected without student consent and IRB approval.

In keeping with social distancing, the researcher will schedule interviews using video conferencing and telephone calls. All participants must complete and return the signed consent letter via scan or e-mail detailing the purpose of the research as well as any benefits and risks before scheduling and proceeding with an interview.

Before beginning the interview, the researcher will ask the participants for their permission to audio record the interview to accurately document the information conveyed. The researcher will then inform the participants, if at any time during the interview they wish to discontinue the use of the recorder or the interview itself, they can, and the interview will stop. The researcher will inform participants that all their responses are confidential and will be used only for educational purposes.

At that time, the researcher will ask for the participants' signed consent and, also inform the participant that participation in the interview implies their consent. The researcher will explain that participation in the interview is completely voluntary. If at any time the participant needs to stop, take a break, or withdraw their participation at any time they can without consequence. Lastly, the researcher will ask if the participant has any questions or concerns before beginning. If not, with their permission and signed consent the interview will begin. This data collection protocol will be followed with each participant.

d. Survey instruments to be used (pre-/post-tests, interview and focus group questionnaires, online surveys, standardized assessments etc.). Attach all survey instruments with your application document):

The interview protocol is attached.

e. Method of selection/recruitment of participants:

Refer to the KSU Mass Email policy on the use emails to faculty/staff. For student recruitment via email, please also follow these mandatory instructions. ALL recruitment materials (flyers, emails, posters, etc.) MUST include your IRB Approval Study # and a statement that your study has been reviewed and approved by KSU's IRB.

The participants in the study will include families of elementary school children in grades Pre-Kindergarten through 5th. The purposeful sample will include a sample size of 8-10 family members (primary caregivers over 18 yrs.). The selection of family members will be based on selecting those willing to participate who fit the criteria of being the primary caregiver of elementary school students in Pre-Kindergarten through 5th. The family member must be the primary caregiver and over the age of 18. The researcher will select family members who fit the criteria and ask them if they are interested in participating. If the participants are interested, the researcher will email a consent letter for the participants to sign and return by scanning and emailing.   Once the researcher receives the signed consent letter, the researcher will contact the participant to schedule a mutually convenient time to proceed with an interview. In keeping with social distancing, the researcher will schedule interviews using video conferencing and telephone calls. All participants must complete and return the signed consent letter detailing the purpose of the research as well as any benefits and risks before scheduling and proceeding with an interview.

f. Participant age range: __**18 and up**__ Number: **8-10** participants

Sex: __Males__ Females or_**X**_Both

g. Incentives, follow-ups, compensation to be used: (e.g., Gift cards, course credit, etc.). Please visit HERE on our website for guidelines on participant incentive payments.

N/A

3. Risks

Describe in detail any psychological, social, legal, economic, or physical risk that might occur to participants. *Note that all research may entail some level of risk, though perhaps minimal.*

According to the federal regulations at **§46.102(i)**, *minimal risk* means that the probability **and** magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.

_**X**_ There is minimal risk (if selected, must be reflected within consent documents)

__ There is more than minimal risk (requires full explanation below and in consent documents)

Anticipated risks include (if selected, specific potential risks must be incorporated into

the consent documents):

N/A

If more than minimal risk is anticipated, describe your method for handling risk.

N/A

4. Benefits

Federal Guidelines and University policy require that risks from participation be outweighed by potential benefits to participants and/or humankind in general.

    a. Identify potential benefits to participants resulting from this research (It is possible that there are no direct benefits or *possible* specific benefits, either must be reflected in the consent documents):

This research will challenge participants and readers to consider what they truly believe about family engagement and the aspects they see as important. Challenging participants and readers to deeply reflect on family engagement beliefs will help them identify attitudes that will promote effective family collaboration practices that benefit teachers, families and most importantly, students.

    b. Identify benefits to humankind in general resulting from this research. While there may be no potential benefits to participants there must be some benefit to humankind in order to receive IRB approval. Please include these benefits in the consent documents:

Benefits to the research will include learning how participants define family engagement within schools. The research will contribute in helping teacher leaders understand what aspects are important when engaging families in the educational process.

5. Informed Consent

All studies of human participants must include informed consent (see IRB approved templates). Consent may require a signature or may simply require that participants be informed. Minor participants must receive an assent form in conjunction with parental consent (see IRB approved templates). If deception is necessary, please justify and describe, and submit debriefing procedures.

What is the consent process to be followed in this study? Submit your consent form(s) with the application as a separate document(s).

The researcher will gain signed consent before interviewing participants. The researcher will ask for the participants signed consent and, also inform the participant that participation in the interview implies their consent. The consent form is attached.

6. Online Surveys (For all electronic surveys, you must submit a link to the final version of the survey.)

Will you use an online survey to obtain data from human participants in this study?

Check all that apply.

_**X**_ No. If no, skip to Question 7 below.

__Yes, I will use an online survey to obtain data in this study. If yes:

    a. How will **online data** be collected and handled? Select one and add the chosen statement to your consent document.

  __ Data collected online will be handled in an anonymous manner and Internet

      Protocol addresses **WILL NOT** be collected by the survey program.

  __ Data collected online will be handled in a confidential manner (identifiers will be

      used), but Internet Protocol addresses **WILL NOT** be collected by the survey

      program.

  __ Data collected online will be handled in a confidential manner and Internet

Protocol addresses **WILL** be collected by the survey program.

b. Include an "I agree to participate" **and** an "I do not agree to participate" answer at the bottom of your consent document. Program the "I do not agree to participate" statement to exclude the participant from answering the remainder of the survey questions (this is accomplished through "question logic" in Survey Monkey or "skip logic" in Qualtrics).

Ensure that the online consent document is the first page the participant sees after clicking on the link to your online survey.

Although you may construct your own consent document, see the IRB approved Online Survey Cover Letter template (http://research.kennesaw.edu/irb/consent-templates.php), which contains all of the required **elements of informed consent** that must be addressed within any online consent document.

7. Vulnerable Participants

Will minors or other vulnerable participants (e.g., prisoners, pregnant women, those with intellectual disabilities) be included in this research?

__Yes. Outline procedures to be used in obtaining the agreement (parental consent, assent or guardian consent) for vulnerable participants. Describe plans for obtaining consent of the parent, guardian, or authorized representative of these participants. For research conducted within the researcher's own classroom, describe plans for having someone other than the researcher obtain consent/assent so as to reduce the perception of coercion.

_**X**_ No. All studies excluding minors as participants should include language within the consent document stating that only participants aged 18 and over may participate in the study.

8. Future Risks

How are participants protected from the potentially harmful future use of the data collected in this research?

  a. Describe measures planned to ensure anonymity or confidentiality. Studies can only be considered completely anonymous if no identifying information is collected; therefore, a cover letter must be used in place of a signed consent form.

  No personal identifying information will be collected. All names and information will be changed. The researcher will use psydeonyms or initials to protect confidentiality. Real names will not be used. All personal information will be removed.

  b. Describe methods for storing data while study is underway. Personal laptops are not considered secure.

  Data (interview notes and recordings) will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home office with researcher only having access to this cabinet.

  c. List dates and plans for storing and/or destroying data and media once study is completed. Please note that all final records relating to conducted research, including signed consent documents, must be retained for at least three years following completion of the research and must be accessible for inspection by authorized representatives as needed.

  Data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home office for three years following the completion of research.

  d. If digital audio, video, or other electronic data are to be used, when will they be destroyed?

Interview audio recording will be destroyed three years after three years following the completion of research.

9. Illegal Activities

Will collected data relate to any illegal activities? __Yes* _**X**_No

This includes asking about illegal activities from participants or surveys containing any reference to illegal activities (e.g., questions requesting information about witnessing illegal behaviors that others have engaged in, minors drinking or using drugs, or any illegal drug use or violence of any nature that would result in legal action).

*If yes, please explain.

N/A

Is My Study Ready for Review?

Every research protocol, consent document, and survey instrument approved by the IRB is designated as an official institutional document; therefore, study documents must be as complete as possible. Research proposals containing spelling or grammatical errors, missing required elements of informed consent (within consent or assent documents), not addressing all questions within this form, or missing required documents will be classified as incomplete.

All studies classified as incomplete may be administratively rejected and returned to the researcher and/or faculty advisor without further processing.

If you are a non-KSU researcher wishing to recruit participants from the KSU campus, please follow these instructions: https://research.kennesaw.edu/irb/international-research.php

Student researchers make sure that your faculty advisor completes the following page and sends all study related material from their KSU email address to irb@kennesaw.edu. Failure to follow this procedure will result in a significant delay in the approval process.

RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE STUDENTS AS PRIMARY INVESTIGATORS

All undergraduate and graduate students who will be acting as the Primary Investigator must be under the direct supervision of a faculty advisor. The faculty advisor must review the IRB application materials and agrees to supervise the student's proposed human subject research project by completion and submission of this routing sheet.

All application materials must be submitted by the faculty advisor from their KSU email address to irb@kennesaw.edu. Students may not submit their materials to the IRB for the first review; however, subsequent revisions can be sent directly to irb@kennesaw.edu with a cc to your advisor and MUST come from your KSU provided email account.

FOR RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY STUDENTS OR NON-FACULTY STAFF. This study, if approved, will be under the direct supervision of the following faculty advisor who is a member of the KSU faculty:

Faculty Advisor

Name:

Dr. Raynice Jean-Sigur

Department:

College of Education

- Email: Phone:

Rjeansig@kennesaw.edu; 470-578-4475

By checking the items below and submitting all materials from your KSU email, the faculty advisor for this project attests the following:

_X__I have personally reviewed each of my student's IRB application documents (approval request, exemption request, informed consent documents, child assent documents, survey instruments, etc.) for completeness, and all documents pertaining to the conduct of this study are enclosed (consents, assents, questionnaires, surveys, assessments, etc.)

_X__ I have completed the Social/Behavioral Research course (Biomedical version only for medical/biological human studies) CITI training course in the ethics of human subject research within the past three years as have all researchers named within this application.

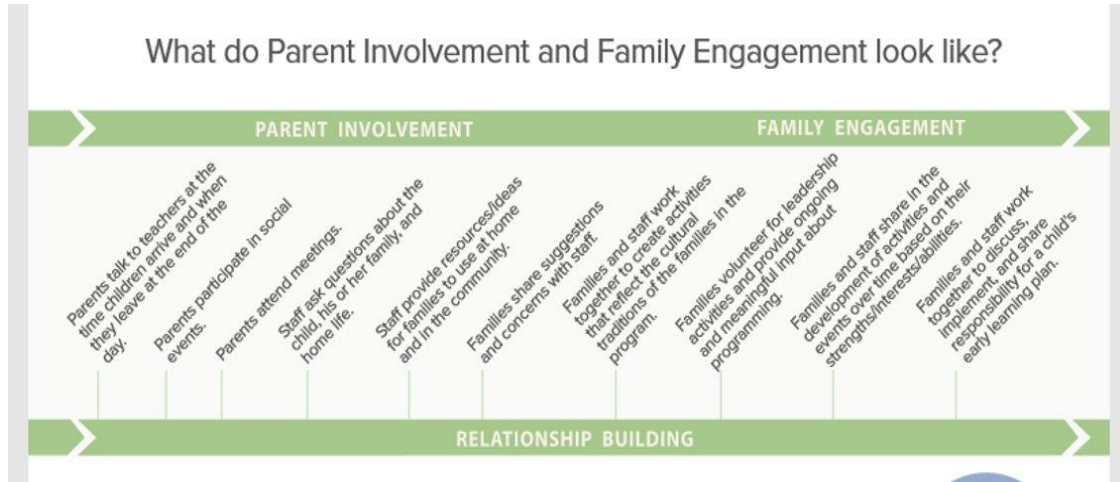__X_I approve this research and agree to supervise the student(s) as the study is conducted.

Date: __3.23.2020_____

Appendix D

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Model of Parent Involvement and Family Engagement

What do Parent Involvement and Family Engagement look like?

Appendix E

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1.1
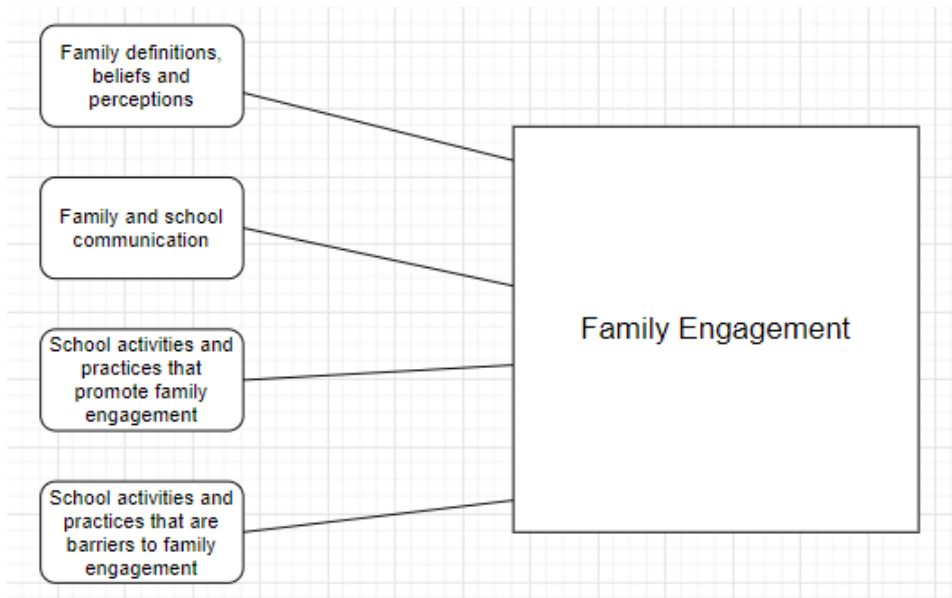
Appendix F

Table 3.1 Demographics of Family Interviews

Participant	Gender/Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Number of Children	Public or Private School	Grade level of child(ren)
Lori	Female 32	African American	Information Technology Sales	3	Public	6th, 1st, Pre-k
Lisa	Female 39	African American	Assistant Principal	2	Public	3rd, 2nd
Chance	Male 46	African American	Teacher	2	Public	3rd, 2nd
Lauren	Female 38	Caucasian	Stay at home mom	5	Public	1st, Kindergarten, Pre-K
Alice	Female 35	African American	Teacher	2	Public & Private	3rd, Pre-k
Nicole	Female 48	African American	Teacher	1	Private	Pre-k
Ben	Male 34	African American	Realtor	3	Public	6th, 1st, Pre-k
Ashley	Female 37	Caucasian	Occupational Therapist	1	Private	Pre-K

Appendix G

Table 5.1 Research questions and themes correlation

Research Question	Theme
How do family members define and perceive family engagement?	• Communication • Communication to build relationships • Involvement (in and out of school)
According to families, which school practices promote family engagement?	• Culture • Involvement activities (cocurricular, extracurricular) • Communication (academic) • Communication to build relationships (technology)
According to family members, which school practices present barriers to family engagement?	• Communication (overload of technology and educational jargon) • Time
What are the perceptions of families regarding their responsibility for communicating with teachers and being engaged as a family?	• Communication (initiated by family) • Communication (with child) • Involvement (support in and out of school)