

IDENTIFYING TEACHER AND PARENTAL COMMUNICATION METHODS THAT
COULD IMPACT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

by

Erin Kathleen Hughes

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Liberty University

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ABSTRACT

Developing and sustaining positive partnerships between parents and educators is a collaborative process whose primary focus should be directed towards student achievement. Due to ongoing educational reform, more researchers and practitioners are concerned about the quality of communication between parents and teachers. The importance of this issue should be addressed to provide an understanding between schools and parents of the impact that communication can pose on student outcomes. The purpose of this applied study was to identify teacher and parental communication methods that could impact educational outcomes at Bayou Elementary School (pseudonym) in northwest Louisiana. This study implemented a multimethod design to include qualitative and quantitative thematic analysis of parents, teachers, and administrators from Bayou Elementary School. Participants including teachers, administrators, and parents were selected based on those who work at Bayou Elementary School or whose children attend Bayou Elementary School. Qualitative data was collected through an informal interview and online focus groups. The data was analyzed using NVivo software to identify common themes using frequency tables. Quantitative data was collected through an online survey database. The data was analyzed using a frequency table, percentages, and graphs to find themes. The results were used to identify areas of improvement in communication at Bayou Elementary School. Recommendations based on the results of the study were provided to the school administration.

Keywords: parent and teacher communication, identifying communication methods, home-school partnerships, communication barriers, educational outcomes

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my loving husband, Hank Hughes, and my two sons, Zachary and Benjamin Hughes. Thank you for always being understanding, supportive, and encouraging of this long-term goal in my life. Each of you sacrificed so much of your time for me to complete this terminal degree. Hank, thank you for always reminding me that with unconditional love, hope, and faith I can conquer anything that I am passionate about in life. Even when I felt frustrated or wanted to give up, you pushed me to keep going and to finish this terminal degree. Thank you for your sacrifice to our country and for our two beautiful children. Zachary and Benjamin, you two are a piece of my heart inside and out. Being a mother to you both has been one of the best gifts from God and a wonderful adventure. My prayer is to see each of you continue to grow and be healthy, succeed, find happiness and love, but most of all to never lose sight of your goals. Work hard and with your faith in God you can achieve anything!

Thank you to my parents, Lee and Celeste McVey, for your lifelong encouragement, love, faith, and support for helping me pursue my educational goals. From the time I started school, you always pushed me to do my best work and to this day still ask me if I finished all of my homework. Thank you for helping me see the value in education, teaching me to be courageous, and loving me for who I am. Thank you to my brother, Dr. Kevin McVey, for letting me vent and share with you the amount of work this took that you experienced when writing your dissertation for your Ph.D. program. If you had not left me with big shoes to fill, I might not be where I am today. Thank you to my brother's wife, Michelle McVey, for encouraging me to keep making a difference in education.

Thank you to my father-in-law, Henry Hughes, who was always proud of me for my

work ethic and commitment to helping others. Also...I miss your grilled steaks. Thank you to my mother-in-law, Jane Hughes, for your loving support and lifelong dedication to education. After 50 years in the classroom, you have taught me that our world will always need teachers with a caring heart. Thank you to all of my family and relatives for your ongoing support and love while achieving this milestone.

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List of Abbreviations

Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19)

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

Parent-Teacher Communication Competences (PTCC)

Parent Teacher League (PTL)

Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

This chapter provides a short background on communication deficits that elementary school teachers and parents may encounter and explores the potential influence that communication methods between parents and teachers can have on student achievement. The problem is that there are potential deficits in communication methods used between parents and teachers can have an impact on student performance. The purpose of this study was to identify teacher and parental communication methods that could impact educational outcomes at Bayou Elementary School, inform the administration whether or not issues were found, and offer possible recommendations. The significance of the study was an impact on students since parents and teacher communication can have an influence on student outcomes. Teachers and parents can benefit from this study by learning new strategies to help improve communication, and students can benefit academically from increased home-school partnerships. The research questions that developed the basis of this study are included, accompanied by terms and definitions that were pertinent to the study. The summary will reiterate the problem and the purpose of the study; include historical, social, and theoretical concepts; explore the significance of the study, identify research questions, and provide definitions commonly used in the study.

Background

Bayou Elementary School is located in an urban area in Northwestern Louisiana. According to the United States Census Bureau (2018), there are an estimated 68,000 residents in the northwest region. Bayou Elementary School serves students in grades kindergarten to fifth grade. There are approximately 665 students who attend Bayou Elementary School with 53% of the student population representing economically disadvantaged families. Parents who represent

different socio-economic backgrounds can have an influence on their child's academic outcomes (Ilie et al., 2017). Evidence suggests that communication skills training can improve parent/teacher interactions that may lead to better academic outcomes. At Bayou Elementary School in northwest Louisiana, part of the school's improvement plan emphasizes the importance of communication between parents and teachers. However, some of the parental involvement opportunities and communication methods for families have changed at Bayou Elementary School. The faculty have been utilizing various communication strategies with parents such as daily contact reports or text messages to try and promote a fruitful partnership with families. Due to the influence that communication between parents and families can have on student achievement, this chapter includes historical, social, and theoretical contexts regarding parent and teacher communication.

Historical Contexts

Learning and understanding the historic roles that families, teachers, and schools have had in education provides opportunities to make changes or improvements through research. Parent and community partnerships in education have been an ongoing trend throughout America's educational history. For example, during the colonial era, Massachusetts was the first state that required local communities to establish and open schools because families wanted to send their children to learn about reading and writing (Vinovskis, 1995). However, not every parent shared the same views of a free and public education controlled by the state government and local agencies. Communities with religious affiliations, as an example, often wanted schools to be focused on religious teachings. During the mid to late 1800s, Catholics that migrated from Europe wanted to send their children to private schools where they could receive an education that incorporates the Christian faith in the curriculum (Gross, 2018). Having the freedom for

parents and schools to have a voice in what is the most ideal learning environment for students has been and will continue to be a top priority in the United States (Lawrence, 2015).

Despite the debate surrounding whether public or private schools are a better choice for students, a common issue that all schools, teachers, and parents encounter are school reform and educational policies. For example, in the past decade, both parent activists and teachers have been questioning why standardized tests are increasing; why an emphasis is being placed on test preparations; and why there is little instructional time for the arts, hands-on projects, and field trips (Goldstein, 2015). All of these previous and ongoing educational concerns further justify why communication between parents and teachers needs to exist because together they can advocate for improved learning environments. Shannon (2017) demonstrated improved outcomes for students when professional reciprocal relationships between parents and teachers are established.

Social Contexts

Teachers have been informed on the importance of communication with families, but without resources available for practitioners and parents it can potentially become a barrier that prevents collaboration (Walker & Legg, 2018). Further, some parents and teachers feel when they are contacted it is to discuss strictly negative concerns versus positive news about their child (Jones et al., 2015). To help prevent uncomfortable conversations, teachers and parents can participate at trainings focusing on communication skills (Bauer et al., 2018). Technological advancements such as mobile phone apps are being used to communicate daily between parents, teachers, and schools on student behavior and school news. Parent and teacher communication has an important impact on a child's education, which is why the present and increasing use of mobile apps can aide in reducing missed phone calls, reminders for school events, and

conferences (Chena & Chena, 2015). However, some parents still prefer to discuss concerns about students in person versus on a phone to avoid any misunderstanding of what is being conveyed (Thompson et al., 2015). Older generations or grandparents who help raise their grandchildren may not have the desire to learn how to use new technology (Tsai et al., 2016). Bordalba and Bochaca (2019) demonstrated how parents need to be educated by schools on the advantages that digital media can provide for parent and teacher communication. This could be beneficial for families who may need ideas to help become involved with their child's teacher. Further, some parents with low-incomes will not have the necessary skills to help due to work and job schedules or access to technology (Santana et al., 2019). Both past and current perspectives on the amount of teacher and parent interaction have evolved into diverse methods of communication which can make it easier for parents to access student data in today's society.

Diversity may also contribute to why teachers and parents can struggle with communicating about a student. Some research has shown that differences in opinion, worldviews, and beliefs systems from teachers and parents are responsible for a lack of communication or involvement (Tveit, 2018). For example, teachers and parents may not agree on which strategies are best to address a child's needs. From a parental perspective, some may feel there is no need to communicate with the teacher or school due to unfair labeling of a child without treating the student as an individual with special needs. Leenders et al. (2019) noted that the challenge of special education is to ensure that each students' needs are being met while taking parental advice seriously to provide the best care possible. To help address students who are at risk, schools have introduced a program to help children with special needs and behavioral concerns called Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). The purpose of PBIS is to ensure teachers are keeping a close eye on a student's overall well-being in case there is a

need for further special education or behavior interventions (OSEP, 2017). Sometimes the interpretations of student success can be different based on the method of communication. For example, teachers will think they are providing enough positive feedback at a conference, but parents do not feel the same way (Kuusimaki et al., 2019). The same scenario can happen through typed messages on an e-mail or mobile app. Regardless of the type of communication used, the potential remains for improvements in communication and collaboration between parents and teachers at Bayou Elementary School.

Parental involvement can be both rewarding and challenging due to the amount of work that needs to occur between the school and home such as signing behavior logs, reading logs, homework, and tests. While some parents will feel confident in their abilities to meet their child's needs, other families will want or seek assistance with parenting strategies to further help them build confidence in raising their child (Hadley & Rouse, 2018). It is a common perception that parents who take an active role in their child's life at an early age will help their child succeed in school by teaching them about responsibilities, independence, confidence, and ethics. However, some teachers feel that they end up being stand-in parents at school due to families who do not have the time or motivation to help their child learn self-help skills, manners, and routines. Rattenborg et al. (2019) concluded that parental engagement can be limited due to work schedules or the distance that parents have to drive to the school, which can lead to teacher frustration. If active communication exists between parents and teachers, then both stakeholders can understand and react appropriately to what is taking place in a child's life.

Teachers and parents have an important role in ensuring that children are receiving the best care in home and at school. Some teachers can become frustrated due to little parental support at home including not training kids how to be responsible or following a daily routine

(Chen & Phillips, 2018). More research has shown that teachers are encouraging home-school collaborations to increase the amount of communication that takes place between teachers and parents. Palts and Loit (2015) reported that effective communication between parents and teachers must take place to form a partnership. Additionally, when parents are not allowed opportunities to see what is going on in the classroom, it can become a struggle to understand the learning environment that their child experiences each day.

Some schools use a program called Daily Explorations which allows parents to see what their child is learning through pictures being sent home in an e-mail (Bacigalupa, 2016). The e-mails also include reasons for why students are learning a specific lesson or topic, which will be similar to standards and learning objectives. This concept of learning correlates with scholarly perspectives that believe learning must be equally balanced with playing, teaching, and communicating (Walsh et al., 2019). It is important for parents to see what their child is learning as some school districts may or may not have an open-door policy for parents to come into the classroom during instructional time. Certain schools may not be allowed to send home graded tests and materials until it is time for progress reports and conferences to take place (Guskey & Brookhart, 2019). Therefore, it is important for parents to take an active role in their child's education by communicating daily with teachers if given the opportunity.

Theoretical Contexts

Identifying theoretical contexts of communication between home and school can help emphasize the significance that partnerships can have on a student's well-being. One theory applied to this research study is Epstein's (2018) six types of parental involvement. Epstein's model is responsible for establishing strong school-community partnerships that entice both families and the community to collaborate together (Wang & Degol, 2016). Teachers and parents

who take the time to build a relationship with a student can help them better understand how to meet each child's academic and emotional needs. Epstein (1989) believed that a child also has specific responsibilities to uphold between their parents and teachers. As students learn through communication from parents and teachers about the importance of school, they see the amount of thought, time, and care that goes into ensuring they are taken care of and supported (Epstein, 1989). Therefore, it is important that both stakeholders understand the importance of communication and shared goals to ensure students are given the best opportunity for academic success.

A second theory applied to this research study is Swap's (1993) four elements of partnerships between home and school. Swap felt it was important to focus on the interaction that takes place between parents and schools. Additionally, Swap believed that parents and educators should be treated the same to help improve student outcomes. Brown (2019) described the partnership theory as a collaborative effort for parents who possess leadership skills. Swap's partnership model presents new opportunities for schools and families to improve relationships that encourages the success and achievement of students, teachers, and parents. Reschly and Christenson (2019) concluded that Swap's model sets a tone for communication and participation that will help instill a norm for families and schools to collaborate with each other. Showing a student or child that their parents and teachers care about their well-being can help ensure they have a strong foundation for the rest of their educational career.

Problem Statement

The problem this research project seeks to explore is that there are potential deficits in communication methods used between parents and teachers at Bayou Elementary School that could have an impact on student performance. Teachers need to communicate with parents and

to provide feedback on students to ensure children are receiving the best education (Dempster & Robbins, 2017). However, some parents struggle with understanding how to communicate effectively with teachers. Studying the concerns of parent and teacher communication and the impact it can have on student achievement has proven to be a challenge in educational research (Gartmeier et al., 2017). A survey of teachers employed in the United States showed that 83% believe the amount of parental involvement in their schools should be increased (Binns et al., 1997). However, not enough research has been conducted on how schools address ineffective communication with parents and sharing sufficient resolutions to increase educational outcomes.

Maintaining open communication and collaboration between teachers and parents has a direct correlation with student achievement in school (Gartmeier et al., 2016). According to Ozmen et al. (2016), certain barriers such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, access to technology, culture, religion, and education can have a negative effect on communication and partnerships among parents and educators. Not enough research has been conducted specifically on communication between elementary teachers and parents in the state of Louisiana. Some research studies have focused on teacher perspectives regarding parental collaboration and communication (Hornby, 2011). However, fewer research studies have been conducted on parental viewpoints regarding what schools are doing to keep parents involved with elementary teachers. Therefore, this study adds to the literature by establishing possible causes of communication deficits among parents and teachers at Bayou Elementary School in northwest Louisiana using a multimethod research design.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to identify teacher and parental communication methods that could impact educational outcomes at Bayou Elementary School, inform the administration

whether or not issues were found, and offer possible recommendations. A multimethod design was used consisting of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The first approach consisted of structured interviews with teachers and administrators. The second approach was a focus group including parents and teachers. The third approach was a quantitative survey with parents and teaching faculty. An important skill elementary teachers must know is how to effectively communicate with parents about a student's performance using parent-teacher communication competences, or PTCC (De Coninck et al., 2018). Some elementary teachers are given permission by schools to contact and communicate frequently with parents using appropriate resource methods. For example, the use of smartphones has now become one method of communication used between parents and teachers (Thompson et al., 2015).

More schools are implementing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to help prevent problem behaviors before they impose on a student's academics (Cohen & Kyzar, 2019). However, not all parents understand that PBIS includes family engagement and feedback. To help ensure parents take an active role in their child's academics, one trending form of contact that elementary teachers use are apps on smartphones (Gao et al., 2017). The convenience of smartphones has resulted in an environment where teachers and parents can communicate through mobile apps (Lin, 2019). The apps connect parents to teachers and allow them to message each other without necessarily having to call the school.

Unfortunately, economic or cultural issues arise when parents do not have a smartphone or are unable to receive text messages due to job requirements, appointments, or state laws requiring hands free phone use while driving (Ozmen et al., 2016). This can pose a serious problem for family engagement due to the amount of time it takes for teachers to contact a parent using a school telephone on their break period, sending an e-mail from a computer, or requesting

a parent conference at the school. By evaluating different methods of communication from both parent and teacher perspectives, this study attempted to identify the communication deficits that exist between parents and elementary teachers at an urban elementary school in Louisiana and presented possible solutions to enhance student outcomes.

Significance of the Study

Research has shown that positive parent and teacher relationships allow teachers to be aware of a student's academic strengths and weaknesses so that they can collaborate and produce a well-balanced academic plan to promote student success (Eisenhower et al., 2016). Both parents and teachers can benefit from understanding each individual students' needs because it can show where a student excels or needs help and can provide opportunities for both stakeholders to work with students at school and home. However, the struggle remains with regards to addressing communication deficits between parents and elementary teachers in an urban school in Louisiana. When communication affects student achievement due to minimal effort from parents and teachers, students will struggle to reach their goals (Breux & Whitaker, 2019).

Although active communication between parents and teachers can lead to increased parental involvement, it can also pose problems from families' and teachers' perspectives (Higgins & Cherrington, 2017). For example, some parents will feel criticized or ridiculed if they are only contacted for negative reasons such as behavioral issues or academic struggles (Jones et al., 2015). Additionally, teachers and parents may not come to an agreement on what is best for their child which could result in hesitation from teachers communicating with parents (Higgins & Cherrington, 2017). This study is beneficial to the education field because it allows elementary schools to identify factors that cultivate communication between parents and teachers. When

elementary schools become more conscious of these factors, they should be able to increase communication between families and teachers and positively impact student achievement.

Research Questions

Central Question: How do communication methods between elementary teachers and parents impact educational outcomes at Bayou Elementary School?

Sub-question 1: How do teachers and administrators in an interview identify effective communication methods at Bayou Elementary School?

Sub-question 2: How do parents and teachers in a focus group identify effective communication methods at Bayou Elementary School?

Sub-question 3: How do quantitative survey data identify effective communication methods between parents and teachers at Bayou Elementary School?

Definitions

1. *Communication* - Communication involves the intentional transmission or sharing of a message or information between two or more people (Sergy, 2017).
2. *Family engagement* - Family engagement refers to the cultural and linguistic relationship that exists between family members and a child (Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center, 2019).
3. *PBIS* - Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports is a multitiered systems approach to building supportive educational environments that address the behavioral needs of all students that has been implemented in over 20,000 schools in the United States and abroad (Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, 2019).
4. *PTCC* - Parent-Teacher Communication Competences foster the exchange of ideas with parents about the development and progress of their children in school during

conversations such as parent–teacher conferences (De Coninck et al., 2018).

Summary

Minimal communication between elementary teachers and parents can have an effect on a student’s education in school. Unfortunately, there are many parent and school related barriers that prevent effective family engagement with teachers (Ozmen et al., 2016). This study identifies potential communication problems that exist between elementary teachers and parents at Bayou Elementary School in northwest Louisiana and offers proposed solutions based on the data from the study. A multimethod design was used consisting of both qualitative and quantitative approaches in this study to determine whether factors profoundly impact communication between parents and elementary teachers.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of this study was to identify teacher and parental communication methods that could impact educational outcomes at Bayou Elementary School, inform the administration whether or not issues were found, and offer possible recommendations. Potential deficits in communication methods used between parents and teachers can have a significant impact on student performance. Parental involvement is a vital part of practice that can help contribute to student success (Rouse & O'Brien, 2017). Therefore, it is important to gain an understanding of theoretical framework and related literature on factors that influence parental and teacher communication. Chapter Two explores the theoretical framework that directed the study and provides a deep analysis of related literature.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is philosophical in nature and includes Epstein's six types of parental involvement (2018) and the four elements of a true partnership between home and school (Swap, 1993). A rationale for each theory is included to show how they relate to factors that influence communication and interaction between parents and elementary teachers at Bayou Elementary School in northwest Louisiana.

Epstein's Six Types of Parental Involvement

Epstein's (2018) six types of parental involvement have been fundamental towards developing research surrounding parental involvement in the field of education (Hamlin & Flessa, 2018). The six types of parental involvement evolved from Epstein's (1989) theory of the overlapping spheres of influence are used to show a strong correlation and connection between the community, family, and school. Ihmeideh et al. (2018) suggests that despite the influence that

family-school relationships (FSR) can have on a child's development, not all families are involved with their child's education. Possible reasons for little involvement might include work schedules, parents who are unable to talk with their child's teacher, language limitations, or not having access to resources that help families learn how to be supportive of educational activities at home (Newman et al., 2019). Therefore, there is a need to address the importance of parental involvement to both schools and parents. Epstein shares the following regarding parental involvement:

No topic about school improvement has created more rhetoric than parental involvement. Everyone says that it is important. In study after study, teachers, parents, administrators, and even students from elementary through high school say that parent involvement benefits students, improves schools, assists teachers, and strengthens families. There are basic beliefs and agreements about the importance of families and the benefits of parental involvement. (p. 3)

As a result, Epstein (2018) created six types of parental involvement that can be referenced when considering degree and frequency of involvement:

Type 1: Parenting—helping all families understand child and adolescent development and establishing home environments that support children as students.

Type 2: Communicating—designing and conducting effective forms of two-way communications about school programs and children's progress.

Type 3: Volunteering—recruiting and organizing help and support at school, home, or in other locations to support the school and students' activities.

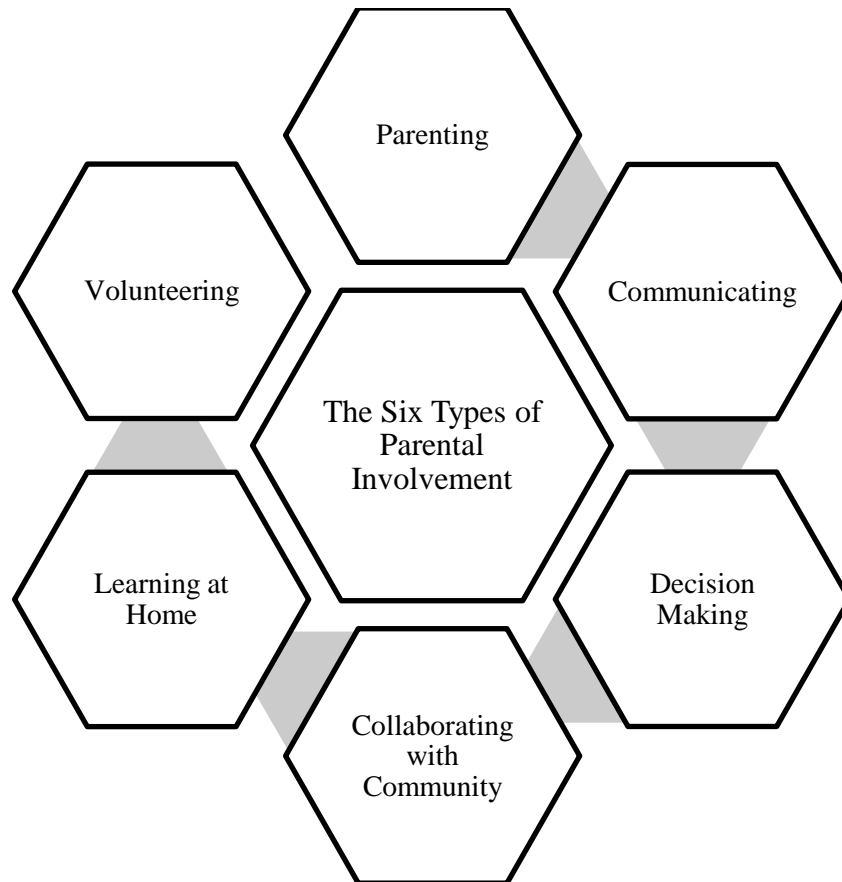
Type 4: Learning at Home—providing information and ideas to families about how to help students with homework and curriculum-related activities and decisions.

Type 5: Decision Making—having parents from all backgrounds serve as representatives and leaders on school committees and obtaining input from all parents on school decisions.

Type 6: Collaborating with the Community—identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to strengthen and support schools, students, and their families, and organizing activities to benefit the community and increase students' learning opportunities (adapted from Epstein 2018, 46).

Figure 1

Epstein's (2018) Framework of Parental Involvement



Epstein (2018) recognizes the concern that communication between schools and families need to match the level of each child's academic, social, and behavioral development regardless of the age or grade-level. Mahuro and Hungi (2016) emphasize that the learning process is not just about students and should include parents and teachers being educated on establishing home-school relationships. Therefore, it is important that schools, families, and communities incorporate each level of parental involvement to ensure that they meet the needs of all students.

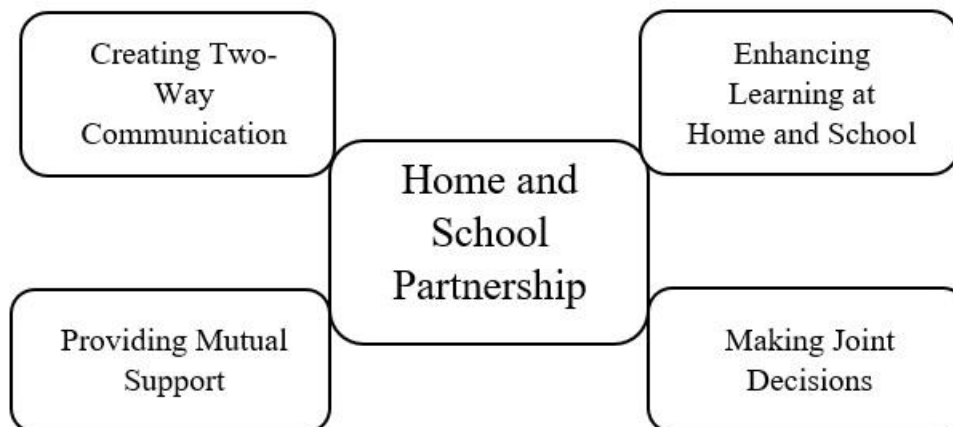
Swap's Four Elements of Partnership

A common theme that has come up in conversations regarding education is the challenge of finding different approaches to engage and involve parents so that they are supporting their child's educational and developmental well-being (Lepkowska & Nightingale, 2019). Likewise, parents who wish to form a strong partnership with schools are advised to advocate not just for their own child, but for all the students so that schools can pinpoint the overall needs of the learning community (Dillon & Nixon, 2018). Swap (1993) dedicated her research towards educating teachers, schools, and parents on the importance of understanding how home-school relationships can be useful.

Swap (1993) believed that effective communication, partnerships, and involvement helps improve a child's academic achievement. Therefore, Swap developed a theory for partnerships between home and school. It focuses on the reciprocal involvement and interaction that occurs among homes and schools in four essential elements.

Figure 2

Swap's (1993) Four Elements of Partnership



Each of the four elements of Swap's (1993) partnership model are described in detail below.

Creating Two-Way Communication

Both parents and teachers should have pertinent information to share with each other. Teachers disclose information with families about their child's progress in school. They also share their classroom policies, expectations, curriculum, school programs, and goals for each student. Parents give information to teachers about their child's personality, abilities, strengths, unique needs, and their visions for the teacher, school, and their child. By creating a two-way communication, the result will be educators and parents who are both kept informed, who have a mutual understanding of goals and expectations for the school and students, and who collaborate to develop a learning environment that focuses on academic excellence for all students.

Enhancing Learning at Home and at School

A child's success in education is attributed to parents who have established high expectations—providing an appropriate learning environment at home so that students can

concentrate on their work, supporting the school and community's educational outreach, and offering constant support and love. Teachers implement curriculum and pedagogy while developing positive relationships with their students to create an optimal learning environment. Both the parents and educators create multiple approaches in which families can become engaged inside and outside of the school to promote their child's education. Parents have a solid understanding of their child's curriculum and methods for monitoring, assisting, or offering more learning opportunities. Parental engagement or involvement at the school might include being teaching assistants or aides, volunteers, participants in educational activities, or offering donations or contributions to help enrich the curriculum.

Providing Mutual Support

Teachers support families by providing educational programs and resources that suit their individual needs or interests. Parents help educators several ways such as volunteering, developing activities for the school, organizing fundraiser programs, and participating in extracurricular activities for their children. Together, both parents and teachers construct strong relationships and when appropriate celebrate their contributions towards each child's academic success or developmental growth. As a result, schools become responsible for the collaboration of the community with parents who possess skills in health, education, and social services.

Making Joint Decisions

Both parents and teachers collaborate together on creating school improvements through increasing participation with committees, councils, and management teams. They become a problem-solving partnership at each level: individual students, classrooms, the school, and the district (adapted from Swap 1993, 57).

Knowing the significance of parental involvement, it is important to gain further understanding in the discipline and pedagogy that educators are implementing to involve families, the struggles they encounter in their efforts of engagement, and how these challenges compare to teachers' individual situations (Hindin & Mueller, 2016). For this reason, schools and families need to find a further understanding of the impact that a true partnership can have on a child's academic and developmental future. Swap (1993) described partnerships as

...a true partnership is a transforming vision of school culture based on collegiality, experimentation for school improvement, mutual support, and joint problem solving. It is based on the assumption that parents and educators are members of a partnership who have a common goal: generally, improving the school or supporting the success of all children in school. Although parents and educators may have different contributions to make to the partnership and educators may be primarily responsible for initiating it, the assumption is that the common mission cannot be accomplished without collaboration. (p. 56)

Teachers and schools understand the value of developing strong partnerships with parents. However, Mapp et al.(2017) cautioned that without proper training programs or resources on family engagement both educators and parents may not know how to communicate effectively. Swap's (1993) model on the four levels of partnership can be used to further educate both parents and teachers on methods for communicating and working together towards student achievement.

The theorists and their ideologies in this study have contributed to understanding the individual thoughts and emotions of students, parents, teachers, school leaders, and those involved in the school community. They also emphasized the knowledge that can be absorbed

regarding how people interact differently among each other and the learning environment surrounding a school and home community. The theoretical framework in this chapter helps provide a clearer understanding on how communication between parents and elementary teachers can have a direct influence on student achievement. The related literature provides a groundwork for comprehending the overall importance of communication between parents and teachers in elementary schools.

Related Literature

For many years, teaching has been considered as one of the most important ways to impact society (Tuluhan & Yalcinkaya, 2018). As education continues to change, teachers must adapt to technological advances, curriculum, laws, and student needs. Being an educator is a huge responsibility and requires specific skills to fulfill the requirements in the classroom and community. One qualification that is necessary to teach is having excellent communication skills. Roman and Ottenbreit-Leftwich (2016) discovered how teaching educators to communicate appropriately to parents through professional development and teacher education programs can lead to improved communication. When teachers and parents establish common goals and expectations for a student's academics and behavior, the results can lead to closer communication (Cohen & Kyzar, 2019). Not only is it important for teachers to understand how to properly communicate with parents, but teachers and parents also have to come up with individualized academic goals for students.

Part of the communication and collaboration process includes sharing ideas or resources, respecting each other's responsibilities, and establishing a common goal (Adams et al., 2016). However, sometimes communicating with parents can prove to be a challenge. When communicating with parents, it is important that teachers have sufficient training in conflict

resolution to avoid or resolve issues (Aich et al., 2017). Some parents could have had negative experiences from past teachers, which could bring a personal bias to their own child's education. On the contrary, teachers who have had positive experiences in communicating with parents are more likely to interact and exchange information with them (Gartmeier et al., 2016). Without knowing a family's background, a teacher will not be able to understand or relate to their student's struggles and needs. Therefore, significant effort must be put into improving communication between parents and teachers.

Parental and teacher communication has proven to have a significant role in a student or child's academic success. Further, communicating with each other helps both stakeholders grasp a further understanding of a student's issues, it increases parental participation in the learning process, executing proper guidance and support, and encourages student motivation and achievements (Ozmen et al., 2016). Establishing school and community partnerships is a valuable asset to all educators and should be implemented as a core practice (Gartmeier et al., 2016). However, maintaining communication skills between parents and teachers is an ongoing concern that can have an impact on student achievement. When minimal interaction or communication takes place, teachers and parents will lose awareness of how to best support a student (Bang, 2018).

Providing opportunities and resources for parents to partner and communicate with the teachers and school can ultimately aide in improving student achievement. Therefore, it is important to examine all related literature on parental engagement and communication including the following: community and school partnerships, school leadership, the barriers of partnerships, conflict resolution, effects on student achievement, communicating equity in education, teacher and parent relationships, teacher and parent perceptions, student perceptions,

parental involvement, school safety, guidelines for communication, communication strategies, and the communication channels used today between families, educators, and schools.

Community and School Partnerships

Creating a partnership and collaboration between the school and community has been a part of an educational reform effort to improve student learning, make schools stronger, and help neighborhoods who are struggling (Valli et al., 2016a). Some schools take pride in having a vision and mission statement so that all stakeholders understand the goals that must be met to achieve student success. It helps in developing and maintaining a positive learning environment, but facilitates collaboration between the schools and community (Whitehead et al., 2013). Further, understanding the responsibilities and roles of both the school and community are important to establish proper communication skills between parents and teachers.

Sheridan and Kim (2016) discuss how elementary school family—school partnerships have a big significance on a student's cognitive development and academic achievement. In order to have a successful partnership, an effort should be made to ensure a positive and professional relationship exists for both families and teachers. Collaboration can be a successful method for effectively implementing school and community partnerships when all stakeholders understand that they must work together and also ask questions on ways to make improvements (Santana et al., 2016). It is not merely a single person's responsibility but a group effort that takes time and teamwork.

The role of a school depends upon how well teachers, support staff, and administrators work together. According to Grubb and Tredway (2015), school leaders and teachers collaborate together and place their influences inside and outside of the classroom to make the best decisions. For example, a school or teachers may work together to persuade and motivate parents

on the importance of being involved with their child's education at home. Chen, Anderson, and Watkins (2016) noted how parents who represent disadvantaged situations will have difficulties with maintaining access to social networks or helpful resources. However, through the help of the school and community partnerships disadvantaged families can receive opportunities that allow them to integrate and network with school officials, organizations, and other parents whose children attend the same school.

Another aspect of community and school partnerships involves education policy and reform to ensure community organizations are providing assistance to parents and schools. Valli et al. (2016b) identified that supporters believe educational prospects will continue to improve if schools ensure they are meeting the needs of their students, families, and neighborhoods by working with community agencies, social services, and government organizations. It is important that schools respond to the concerns of families and the community so that the importance of communication and partnerships resonates with the school districts (Gannon et al., 2018). There are several examples of community partnerships from the government that can help parents and schools serve the needs of each student. These may include therapy sessions for families, behavioral programs for parents, and intervention programs for children with social, behavior, or developmental needs (Shapiro & Harper Brown, 2016). Sharing resources with parents can reassure them that communities and schools are collaborating to promote student achievement.

School Leadership

School leaders are an important part of ensuring that teachers and parents are building effective communication partnerships. Carrier (2017) noted that the quality of school leadership is dependent on how administration leads the communities where they work. An example of implementing communication partnerships is to host meetings and conversation workshops

between parents and teachers that focuses on student achievement (Aabdini, 2010). The role of an administrator is also important for pursuing various methods of communication for families, community partners, and teachers. Jones et al. (2018) discuss this role:

Experience has taught many leaders in today's schools that this includes consistently translating outgoing information in the multiple languages of the linguistically diverse students and community, using various methods of sharing outgoing information, and providing vehicles to generate feedback on the quantity and quality of that information. (p. 2)

To help in sharing the responsibilities of communication, teachers can be given the role of relaying information to students and parents from the school leadership (Spillane & Lowenhaupt, 2019). Harris (2016) shared that instilling a school climate with trust and encouragement will result in teachers feeling included and supported with their communication efforts for students and parents. Ebell et al. (2017) reported that empowering school administrators with the appropriate resources, amount of time, and a precise guideline can help instill motivation to reach their communication goals. Ultimately, school leaders who are understanding and believe in effective communication between teachers and parents could have a positive influence on student achievement.

Barriers of Partnerships

The purpose of parental engagement is to nurture and develop a reciprocal method of interaction between the home and school while exchanging thoughts, values, and wisdom (Schneider & Arnot, 2018). In order for a strong partnership between parents and educators to occur, it is vital to address and reflect upon potential issues or barriers that could have a negative effect on the engagement between families and teachers (Wilson, 2019). The growth in student

poverty rates and an increase in immigrant students or those from diverse cultural backgrounds has had a major impact in education (Iorio, 2017). One reason that parental partnerships with schools might be limited is due to poverty or socioeconomic status, which has proven to have an impact on students' education (Goodall, 2017).

Sometimes it may seem hard for parents with low socioeconomic status to feel valued or that they have anything to offer, especially if the practitioner is experienced or highly educated in teaching children (Cronin et al., 2017). Busy work schedules for families who are facing financial hardships may not provide the time to engage with a child's teacher or school except for informal conversations or unannounced visits (Lechuga-Peña & Brisson, 2018). That is why it is imperative to treat all families as part of a team effort in communication because educators and schools may not know or understand the personal hardships that each family endures.

When students progress to the next grade level, families move to a new location, or any big change to a family's living situation, these are all significant transitions that can have an impact on a child's education (O'Connor, 2018). Transitions are commonly related to readiness, which translates into a student's ability to be academically ready for school (OECD, 2017). During transitional changes in a child's education, parents and educators can work together as a partnership when issues arise by supporting the child's strengths and talents to cope with the challenges (Symonds, 2015). Some examples of families and teachers working through transitions include back to school meetings welcoming both students and parents so that they may discuss expectations and concerns with teachers, home visits, school open houses, and report cards (Wickett, 2019). If transitions are not handled in a delicate manner, they can become a barrier towards effective communication, involvement, and partnerships among families and teachers which can impact student achievement.

Another potential barrier that could hinder parental involvement with teachers and schools are language or cultural differences. Overall, language and culture are essential to a child's development and education. Teachers should deepen their efforts to create an array of knowledge towards each family's linguistic and cultural environment (Virmani et al., 2017). Studies have shown that minority students who represent families that offer sufficient support to their students, families that speak the English language proficiently, and students who want to be involved in their schoolwork had the most academic improvement (Soutullo et al., 2016). However, some parents whose primary language is not English may have limited resources due to inflexible work schedules, transportation, or lower educational goals which can place a hindrance on parental interaction or engagement (Alexander et al., 2017).

There is a need for teachers to interact with bilingual family values and their perspectives without passing judgement or making assumptions on their linguistic background or cultural environment (Wearmouth & Goodwyn, 2019). Too often, teachers jump to conclusions or make accusations about a student's family without getting to know them. Further, parents who represent different languages may insist upon their own unique goals or expectations that do not necessarily coincide with their child's teacher or school (Antony-Newman, 2019). Factors such as socioeconomic status, religious, and cultural backgrounds should not be barriers towards a student's academic success in school (Dempster & Robbins, 2017). This is why it is important to discuss and develop expectations that both parents and schools can understand to prevent any misunderstanding or miscommunication.

Conflict Resolution

Sometimes conflicts or disagreements can arise concerning student performance in school. When parents or teachers find themselves in difficult situations, they can communicate

differently depending on how they feel (Price & Ota, 2016). In order to help promote effective problem-solving skills, it is important to train teachers and staff on ways to handle disputes or discrepancies with parents. Council (2011) advised that schools who have developed conflict resolution skills will have more success with collaborative partnerships and families. Having an action plan to resolve differences between parents and teachers will help prevent families from potentially making hurtful remarks or escalating the situation by going to the school district leadership (Schwanke, 2016).

When teachers are discussing concerns about a student with parents, it can be difficult for families to hear what their child is not doing in school correctly. One recommendation is to share ideas or resources with parents on ways that they can help a student make improvements in the classroom or while at home (Novick, 2016). Staying positive and sharing good news with parents can help prevent negative impressions towards teachers. Some schools have implemented positive referrals for behavior and academics to emphasize that students should be praised both in school and at home (Whitaker, 2016). By parents and teachers communicating about the accomplishments of students, both stakeholders will have a better relationship to discuss any concerns or areas that need improvement.

Effects on Student Achievement

Understanding related research studies involving communication between parents and educators helps determine whether or not partnerships have had an effect on student achievement. Sirvani (2007) examined the effect of parental involvement on students' mathematics achievement. He concluded that students whose parents were given progress reports outperformed the students whose parents did not receive progress reports. Bryce et al. (2019) reported there is a need for collaborative methods between parents and teachers to encourage

positive learning behaviors at home and school. Admiring the accomplishments of student work with parents gives children a sense of pride and self-worth. Niia et al. (2014) stated that involvement and participation from parents and teachers are multidimensional concepts that can be viewed differently based upon the methods of communication.

There are various interactive strategies for ensuring that parents feel involved and in touch with their child's teacher. Wright et al. (2018) implemented a research study to determine if home visits from teachers would help increase parental involvement, improve student achievement, and make positive improvement to classroom behavior. Taking extra time out of a teacher's schedule to conduct home visits can truly show families how much they care about their students. Results from the study showed that families who received home visits from teachers had a significant improvement in parental involvement, student achievement, and classroom behavior compared to families who did not have home visits (Wright et al., 2018). Having multiple communication methods available can make a significant difference in the amount of participation and involvement between parents and teachers.

Research studies have shown that parent communication and involvement have contributed to improvements of student outcomes (Veas et al., 2019). However, minimal research has focused on the mechanisms such as students' levels of motivation or behavior that positively impacted student achievement (Anthony & Ogg, 2019). Anthony and Ogg's (2019) research demonstrated a positive relationship between parental involvement with schools and academic achievement, but emphasized the importance that each student is unique and learns differently. We cannot assume that all students will be motivated the same way or that students will view their parents as supportive (Watson & Bogotch, 2015). This is why it is imperative for

educators to maintain a positive relationship with students and parents to determine how each child learns best and what motivates them to succeed.

Communicating Equity in Education

Students who have special needs, represent minority groups, or come from low-income homes deserve equal academic opportunities in all schools regardless of their ethnic, religious, or family backgrounds. Families representing local communities need to collaborate with teachers and schools to provide opportunities such as after school programs and summer camps to help underprivileged or special needs children (Gordon et al., 2017). In order for effective communication to take place between parents and teachers, resources and strategies for successful partnerships should be presented. Sonnenschein and Sawyer (2018) described the following strategies that have proven to help improve partnerships between minority parents and schools:

Establishing a school structure for partnerships, embracing diversity and leveraging the assets of minority families, cultivating a collaborative culture and empowering all families to become partners, confronting school personnel's misconceptions and biases to build trust between families and schools, creating a welcoming environment, and fostering two-way communication. (p. 217)

Not only is it important to address the barriers of ethnicity between schools and families, it is also vital to address educational equity for students who have special needs. Each child learns differently and those who have been diagnosed with learning or medical conditions could be eligible for special education services (Brady et al., 2020). Parents of children with special needs may not understand how to navigate the school system regarding the evaluation process to receive special education (Shepherd et al., 2017). It is important that teachers communicate and

follow appropriate guidelines directed from the school district, state, and federal government regarding the laws and policies on special education rights. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a legal document that provides information for the parents, school, and teachers on what specific accommodations a student should be receiving in all classes during the school year (Wolraich et al., 2019).

Parents who are new to special education, speak another language, or represent a low-income home may not be aware of the resources available to them. Power and Andrews (2018) reported that parents of children with special needs can feel confused, irritable, upset, and unsure of their parenting abilities. Therefore, it is important that teachers and schools ensure there is active communication with resources made available for families to access or use at their discretion (O'Regan, 2019). One approach that could prove useful for parents who want more information on the resources for special education is to provide a training or workshop for all parents whose children are currently being evaluated or are currently on an IEP (Bateman & Cline, 2019). Also, special education teachers can reach out to parents using similar communication methods like the regular classroom teachers by providing daily or weekly updates as needed about each student (Fiore & Fiore, 2018). Ensuring that all students are protected and cared for by schools, teachers, and parents is one of the reasons why communication is vital to student achievement.

Teacher and Parent Relationships

In order to serve each child's needs, it is vital to discuss the important role that parents and teachers play in a student's life. Parents and teachers can have a significant impact on a student's achievement in school. By discussing and interacting with each other, parents and teachers can establish a common goal for students (Higgins & Cherrington, 2017). The idea is

that if both parents and teachers maintain a positive relationship, then both parties will be more comfortable with sharing information and communicating. However, sometimes conflicts can arise and cause discomfort, hurt feelings, and could hinder a student's goals. An example would be when teachers and staff place too much emphasis on at-risk students. Parents of students who excel academically or exhibit good behavior will feel left out even though teachers are limited to a specific amount of time for all students (Cohen & Kyzar, 2019). Therefore, it is important that teachers and parents communicate together on a regular basis whether a student is exhibiting academic or behavioral problems but also share positive stories of students.

Parents and teachers both have expectations of what they want for a child's education. Almost all parents want their children to be educated by teachers who are caring, encouraging, and understand how to help each student with individualized instruction (Appelbaum, 2009). Likewise, teachers want parents who care about being informed and updated periodically on their child's academic and behavioral progress throughout the school year (Gunning, 2004). As parents and teachers communicate and maintain a positive relationship, it is important that they establish trust with one another (Santiago et al., 2016).

Another important aspect of maintaining a professional relationship is through active listening. Sometimes when discrepancies happen, parents and teachers will find it difficult to converse due to differences in beliefs or having incomplete information (Lin, 2019). Learning to use and implement effective communication skills can prevent awkward or unpleasant confrontations. Tuluhan and Yalcinkaya (2018) defined how good communication is a group effort that allows opportunities for people to share their feelings and experiences so they can learn and understand what others think and feel. By doing so, parents and teachers will gain a greater perspective on how best to serve the needs of students and instill honesty.

When parents, teachers, and schools collaborate and connect with each other it can lead to positive student outcomes (Sheldon, 2019). If proper inclusion and relationships between teachers and parents are established, it can result in students feeling included, making friends easier, and most of all succeed academically (Sucuoğlu & Bakkaloğlu, 2018). However, not all students learn on the same cognitive level. For example, parents who have students with special needs may want to establish an especially close relationship with teachers due to the extra support that is needed to support a child's behavioral and academic goals (Garbacz et al., 2016). Teachers and schools should be receptive of families with children who have unique needs so that they may know how to best serve each child in school and home.

By maintaining an open flow of communication between parents and teachers, there will be fewer risks of conflict about how a child is doing at school and home. If teachers recognize that parents know and understand what is going on with their child as far as issues or concerns, it is less likely that conflict will arise with power struggles and overstepping roles (Leenders et al., 2019). It is important to ensure that both parents and teachers communicate so that all students' needs are being met at home and in the classroom.

Teacher and Parent Perceptions

Part of understanding the struggle between parents and teachers communicating is to understand what they are thinking and feeling. According to Rattenborg et al. (2019), a school's environment and culture can encourage positive outcomes or create more issues. Parents may find or believe a school to not be friendly, welcoming, or accepting of different ideas. Likewise, teachers will not be able to communicate as often or frequently due to a large classroom of students or lack of time (Palts & Loit, 2015). A common perception that parents and teachers face is time management. Due to busy work schedules or jobs, parents will not be able to be as

involved as they would like to be with their children. As for teachers, they will undergo stress due to large classroom sizes, workload, little pay raises, and as a result leave the teaching profession (Queen & Queen, 2013). When teachers have little time and are continuously presented with more tasks, meetings, or additional obligations, teachers can feel burnt out or overwhelmed (Richards et al., 2016).

Cultural awareness can play a role in the amount of communication that exists between parents and teachers. If a family represents a minority group, they will not necessarily understand or know about the school culture compared to other families (Conus & Fahrni, 2019). To help families from feeling discriminated against, schools and teachers must respect and acknowledge their cultural differences so that they will feel included (Tveit, 2018). By avoiding miscommunication, parents and teachers will feel valued and part of a team. Partnerships among families and teachers happen when there is equal power, responsiveness, reciprocity, positive behaviors, and sensitivity to others' feelings (Hadley & Rouse, 2018).

Parents want to feel valued and want their opinions to be heard, but sometimes they feel their questions or feedback are not validated (Dempster & Robbins, 2017). Some parents who represent minority groups can struggle to communicate with teachers and schools due to cultural diversity (Conus & Fahrni, 2019). For example, a parent may not feel comfortable attending a PTA meeting or school conference due to language barriers. They may want to be more supportive of their child, but there are issues in communication that hinder their participation. Over time, schools have become more culturally diverse, requiring teachers to learn about cultural backgrounds and family perspectives (Smith & Sheridan, 2019). Latunde (2017) suggested that just because schools may not see what parents and families are doing at home, it

does not imply parents are not involved with their child's academics. This is why educators should be open-minded and respectful of diverse families.

By providing parents with opportunities for them to share their culture, express their viewpoints, and feel valued, they are more likely to participate and feel engaged with their child's teachers (Conus & Fahrni, 2019). In the past, if teachers wanted to communicate to parents, it required a phone call or face-to-face conference. Other methods used to convey information were written documents such as letters, calendars, and daily behavior logs. In today's home-school community, parents can help keep track of their child's progress by communicating with schools using digital media (Bordalba & Bochaca, 2019).

Student Perceptions

Although it is important to establish a strong partnership between families and practitioners, it is also essential for parents and teachers to work as a team with students on student perceptions about school, communicating with their peers, and providing feedback on personal goals and accomplishments. One common concern that students address is the need to feel like they are allowed to share their knowledge and opinions to teachers and their peers without the teachers speaking over them (Gillies, 2019). By providing learning opportunities for students to share their own views and experiences, not only are they fostering two-way communication, but they are also constructing socialization skills (Hargreaves, 2017). Giving students the opportunity to share and express their feelings in the classroom and at home develops trust and stronger partnerships in the school community.

In order to create an environment where all students, teachers, and parents feel valued and appreciated, there needs to be a multi-systemic approach to cultivate a partnership (Allen & Kern, 2019). Some ways that teachers and parents can get involved is by encouraging student

projects that require group effort such as debates, jigsaw activities, PowerPoint© presentations, share and compare activities, and open discussions (Management, A. I. R., 2017). Different collaborative activities can further reinforce peer relation skills, which are described as the ways that students exhibit positive behaviors with their peers, offer assistance to others, attempt to understand others' feelings, and defend peers when they are involved in conflicts (Jurkowski & Hanze, 2017). By developing parental and teacher support systems, students will learn how to effectively interact with peers and adults in the community which can have a positive influence on their academic achievement.

Parental Involvement

Parent involvement can vary from each family depending on how they envision partnerships between schools and parents, what their time commitments are, and if they feel valued from the school system. This involvement can differ based on the age of the child (Gonzalez-DeHass, 2019). One strategy for increasing parental involvement in schools is through teacher and staff professional development on parent engagement. Staff training on parental involvement can include implementing a welcoming learning environment for families, overseeing parent concerns, sustaining positive relationships with families, addressing the concerns of parents, and providing opportunities for partnerships in the school and community (Morgan, 2017). Steele and Whitaker (2019) shared the following:

We should not lose sight of the significance of building relationships, so that we can help parents understand the importance of their involvement – the importance of reading to their child, for example. Providing a loving and caring family-school relationship could involve communicating ideas to help overburdened parents cope and being sensitive to

the environment at home when assigning homework or how we handle correspondence.
(p. 43)

Parents who want to feel involved in their child's life will want to serve or help out at the school in addition to helping their child at home. Urhahne (2019) brings attention to the fact that parents will differ from teachers with regards to the direction they take towards helping their child reach success. For parents, being involved can mean helping a child read, do math homework, or volunteering at the bookfair at school. However, sometimes parents can be limited to the amount of help they can provide at the school (Rattenborg et al., 2019). This will be due to a lack of time the school has or rules set forth by the district on times when parents can help or volunteer. One approach for parents to become involved with the school community is by volunteering at a Parent Teacher Association, or PTA. It serves the purpose of allowing parents the opportunity to work alongside teachers to establish and attain shared goals (Fisher, 2018).

Some of the concerns that parents might be faced with regarding parental participation include irregular work schedules, difficulty communicating with teachers and school leaders, and employment insecurity (Hamlin & Flessa, 2016). Parents who represent minority families can encounter language or culture barriers that prevent them from wanting to get involved. For example, in some cultures fathers are not responsible for raising or getting involved with a child's education. Instead, mothers are held responsible for parental involvement with supporting a child's academic activities such as helping with homework, discussing important information with teachers and administrators, volunteering for school events, and encouraging their child (Jeziarski & Wall, 2019).

Another issue that could limit a parent's ability to get involved at a child's school is if they physically cannot attend due to being incarcerated. Being confined and unable to help with

any school activities, such as homework or reading can impact having a positive and active relationship between the parent, school, and child. Also, some parents who have had communication with the law will be apprehensive about keeping records of involvement at the school (Haskins & Jacobsen, 2017). Parents who do not have the ability to participate can lead to a further gap between communication with teachers and school events.

School Safety

When parents, teachers, and schools are making important and collaborative decisions about a child's education, they also should take into account the safety of the school and whether children will be protected from harm (Hamlin, 2017). Parents, teachers, and administrators can communicate together to help ensure the safety of children is their top priority. Garcia (2016) noted how it is very common for schools in the United States to employ police officers to help keep students and faculty safe. However, some crime prevention measures such as uniforms, reduced parental and student movement, surveillance monitors, and locked doors can be perceived that a school is unsafe or already has a problem with crime (Lesneskie & Block, 2017). Mowen (2015) cautioned that by increasing security measures, it will decrease the amount of parental involvement. Therefore, it is important that schools communicate and keep parents, students, and teachers informed about their goals for safety and their rationale for implementing safety precautions without instilling fear.

In order to keep students and teachers safe, it is important to train and educate schools on how to prevent violence or what to do in an emergency situation (Song et al., 2019). By doing so, it will create less fear and increase comfort from knowing how to react and respond in the event of an emergency. An example of a professional training on safety that both parents and teachers can attend would be on bullying due to the important roles that both stakeholders play on a

student's developmental needs (Malm et al., 2017). Having and implementing a school safety plan with input from teachers and parents will more than likely have a positive effect or increase on parental involvement (Murray et al., 2014).

The recent trends in school related violence and crimes have created a need and a space for communities to partner in a national collaboration of school leaders, practitioners, families, and students (Aefsky, 2019). Due to ongoing safety concerns from parents and schools, more districts are using school resource officers to help keep students and teachers safe. A school resource officer's responsibility is to communicate with practitioners, families, and the community to ensure that children are obeying school rules and behaving appropriately both in school and in the local neighborhood. They are also responsible for protecting everyone on the school property (Duxbury & Bennell, 2020).

Parents and schools rely on police officers to not only protect the students and faculty but to train and educate the school and community on safety. School resource officers can provide community presentations and teach students, parents, teachers, and school boards about safety, crime prevention, and issues in school such as gun violence, sexual harassment, and bullying (Watts, 2019). Ensuring that school resource officers are offering their services to the school community will create a safer and more cohesive learning environment.

Guidelines for Communication

Communication involves being able to share ideas, engage in respectful conversations with others, and correspond to people (Meiser, 2019). A plan for communication should be implemented to uphold community partnerships between teachers, parents, and schools or minimal efforts will happen (Bagin & Gallagher, 2001). One possible method to ensure effective communication is taking place is to establish communication guidelines. It is critical for parents

and schools to have an established set of communication rules so that both stakeholders can assist in the student's learning process (Dempster & Robbins, 2017). Pawlas (2013) noted that a communication plan should include the following:

Citizen, parent, and student groups of all kinds; key communicators; visits to and use of the school by parents and the public; questionnaires, direct interviews, and informal opinion surveys; parent-teacher meetings and visits; school board activities; use of the community power structure; and other miscellaneous techniques. (p. 271)

Establishing a strong parent partnership is vital to the success of all students. One way that parents can communicate and address their concerns is through an advocacy group. Together, parents can support change with the school to maintain accountability and ensure that ideas are heard (Dillon & Nixon, 2018). Asking questions can aid in significant improvements for the benefit of students and schools.

Communication Strategies

Communication is the art of understanding, reading, listening, and sharing one's ideas through writing, speech, or body-language (Dempster & Robbins, 2017). How parents and teachers act towards each other is just as vital to communication as how they speak or respond to one another. It is important for teachers and parents to establish an interactive dialogue between both parties so that they can benefit from productive collaboration of ideas and needs (Gonzales & Frumkin, 2018). Leenders et al. (2019) expressed that when it comes to two-way communication between parents and teachers, the parents tend to be advice seekers while the teachers are advice givers. However, practitioners and parents should be working together seeking both advice and wisdom so that they can work together effectively. Families who are involved in social networks have an advantage because they can meet other parents who can

offer advice about the school's goals and policies and monitor student engagement with school-related responsibilities (Murray et al., 2015). Having veteran parents whose children are in other grades at the same school can help ease tension for new families who are concerned about their child's school or teacher.

Sharing various types of research strategies with parents and schools provide significant justification on why maintaining parental and teacher communication is important. Knowing the best methods or strategies for communication will help prepare parents, teachers, and schools build a successful partnership (Fiore, 2017). It can be stressful for both families and educators, especially if the conversation involves conflict resolution. During difficult conversations, families, educators, or administrators can be upset, irritated, or angry which can lead to rash statements or hurtful comments (Council, 2016). Instead of making the interaction about who is right or wrong, focus on a common understanding by doing so in a professional and courteous manner (Whitaker & Fiore, 2015).

Examples of communication strategies that promote positive change would be to incorporate reciprocal viewpoints from families and educators, address concerns at home and school, and develop a collaborative and coordinated intervention plan for academic or behavior concerns (Simon, 2020). Additionally, parents should be encouraged to create a list of questions or concerns with the mindset and understanding that their child's teacher has their best interest in mind and that this communication is not meant to attack or ridicule (Wages, 2016). Without having a mutual understanding from parents and educators, finding common ground on what is best for a child's education can prove to be challenging.

Communication Channels

Over the years, there have been evolving and trending communication channels between

parents and classroom teachers. Starting with the most commonly known method of communication, parent-teacher conferences. Parent-teacher conferences can be effective if all parties are in attendance to express their opinions. Conflicts tend to arise when a conference involves discussing academic or behavioral issues (Tveit, 2018). Emotions can run high, which makes conferences not always the best method of communication. Most of the daily communication that parents are familiar with include papers and documents in folders or notebooks. However, some parents will not receive papers from school if students lose them or do not want their parents to see the documents (Leenders et al., 2019). This can potentially lead to miscommunication or conflict if parents are feeling they are not being kept informed about important information regarding their child.

Technology has continued to progress in the field of education to help keep parents informed. One of the first places that families go to for information is a school's website (Blackburn et al., 2018). A school's website can be important for keeping families updated on calendar events, school news, inclement weather, or classroom supply lists. Chena and Chena (2015) discussed how the traditional method of communication such as sending papers home is becoming replaced by e-communication. Different types of technology used for communication include social media apps, text messaging apps, Skype®, or e-mail. Although these methods for communication should not replace important documents such as report cards, they are still very useful for parents and teachers to ensure information is being communicated.

One type of emerging technology method for communication is called an electronic portfolio. According to Higgins and Cherrington (2017), electronic portfolios are a combination of media and video recordings showcasing individual student work and photos and clips of projects. Some portfolios also give parents the opportunity to respond and communicate to

teachers. This is a wonderful resource that can keep parents from questioning or wondering what a student is learning in the classroom without disrupting instructional time.

Similar to an electronic portfolio, photo collages are also being implemented to showcase student work on a daily basis to parents through e-mail. By allowing parents the opportunity to see what each child is doing inside the classroom, it gives parents validation and understanding as to why the activities their children are doing are important (Bacigalupa, 2016). Establishing this type of communication gives parents an opportunity to feel involved and part of a school community or partnership (Hadley & Rouse, 2018). Through the use of daily communication, it also gives teachers a sense of accomplishment in helping document and share their students' achievements.

Another example of a trending communication channel between teachers and parents is digital platforms. Using this method of technology, teachers can provide and inform parents about how the school day went, grades, behavioral concerns, and any additional feedback that pertains to the student (Kuusimaki et al., 2019). However, due to the amount of time it takes to send information about each child, it is not necessarily the best approach to ensure all students receive the same amount of attention or feedback. That is why sometimes teachers still use papers, go-home folders, and phone calls to ensure students are all receiving adequate amounts of feedback for parents to discuss.

Summary

Chapter Two consists of a theoretical framework and review of literature regarding communication among parents and teachers. The literature review includes the theoretical framework for this study: Epstein's six types of parental involvement (2018) and the four elements of a true partnership between home and school (Swap, 1993). A detailed rationale of

how each theory is related to teacher and parent communication is included. Pertinent studies and literature were reviewed to create a larger understanding of the relationship that exists between student achievement and parental and teacher communication.

Communication between parents and teachers is an important part of a student's academic success in the classroom. Whether a student needs assistance or encouragement, it is necessary that teachers and parents collaborate and interact with each other to ensure they are both meeting each child's needs. Although the factors that can impact communication vary greatly from classroom to home, teachers have come up with various methods for communicating effectively with parents (Chena & Chena, 2015). Understanding the perceptions of both teachers and parents are important in the successful implementation of communication between stakeholders. Further research is needed to identify the benefits of parental engagement for academic success (Garbacz, 2019). The significance of the study is to address gaps in the literature related to deficiencies in communication methods used between parents and teachers and its perceived impact on student performance.

CHAPTER THREE: PROPOSED METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to identify teacher and parental communication methods that could impact educational outcomes at Bayou Elementary School, inform the administration whether or not issues were found, and offer possible recommendations. The concern that ineffective communication between teachers and parents can have an impact on student outcomes has become a widespread issue among elementary schools in the United States. This applied research study analyzed the interpretations of parents and elementary teachers at Bayou Elementary School regarding the amount, type, and quality of communication that exists between participants to determine the influence on student performance. Chapter Three of the research presents a thorough detail of the participants in the study and a multimethod research design including interviews, a focus group, and a quantitative survey. This section concludes by describing clearly defined procedures that were used to gather data.

Design

This research study used a multimethod design using qualitative and quantitative approaches. Since the purpose of a multimethod design is to produce answers that are assessed through questions, surveys, and interviews, it replicated the characteristics of reality and research with practice (Bickman & Rog, 2009). In applied research, the purpose is to solve a problem through practical research and develop possible solutions that address the issue (Nicholls, 2018). In this study, the problem is that there are potential discrepancies in communication methods used between parents and teachers that could have an impact on student performance. The researcher's role was to interview, question, and survey parents, teachers, and administrators to determine whether communication barriers exist. The researcher then shared proposed solutions

based on the increased awareness from the study.

For this research study, there were three data collection approaches used. For the first collection approach, a qualitative interview was conducted between the researcher and school employees that included elementary teachers and an administrator. The second collection approach involved a qualitative focus group between the researcher and parents whose children attend Bayou Elementary School. The third collection approach, a quantitative survey, was administered to parents, elementary teachers, and an administrator. All three collection approaches were used in this multimethod research study in an effort to determine whether communication issues exist between parents and teachers at Bayou Elementary School. The results were used to develop proposed solutions based on the increased awareness from the study.

Research Questions

Central Question: How do communication methods between elementary teachers and parents impact educational outcomes at Bayou Elementary School?

Sub-question 1: How do teachers and administrators in an interview identify effective communication methods at Bayou Elementary School?

Sub-question 2: How do parents and teachers in a focus group identify effective communication methods at Bayou Elementary School?

Sub-question 3: How do quantitative survey data identify effective communication methods between parents and teachers at Bayou Elementary School?

Setting

The setting for this research study was at Bayou Elementary School located in northwest Louisiana. This elementary school was chosen to study because it uses multiple types of

communication tools such as the Remind App, Facebook, PBIS App, PTO meetings, and newsletters as methods for addressing student performance with parents. Maintaining open communication among parents and teachers has been an ongoing concern in education. Gartmeier et al. (2016) discussed the importance of teachers communicating with parents because it is the main resource for maintaining productive community partnerships. Bayou Elementary School is located in a school district with some of the highest standardized test scores and ranked schools in the state of Louisiana. The community has a growing economy due to the nearby military installation that is producing more demand for businesses and jobs in the region.

The faculty and staff at Bayou Elementary School consist of a principal, an assistant principal, teachers that represent grades pre-kindergarten through fifth grade, and multi-grade specialists. There are approximately 726 students enrolled at Bayou Elementary School, and over three-fourths of the student population represent low-income homes. Teachers and staff at Bayou Elementary School are expected to communicate daily with parents regarding academic and behavioral concerns. Binders are sent home with each student and include a behavioral log, notes from the teacher, homework, classwork, graded assessments, or progress reports. In addition, papers were sent home to parents at the beginning of the school year asking families to download the Remind and PBIS apps using secure login credentials. Both apps can work on cell phones and allow parents and teachers to communicate with each other without having to disrupt classroom instructional time. The sufficiency of the interaction between teachers and parents is the subject of this research.

Participants

The participants for this applied research study were invited to partake in the study if they were a parent, teacher, or administrator from Bayou Elementary School. The first sample of participants for the interview section of the study were eight elementary teachers and two administrators. The second sample of participants for the focus group section were six parents and five teachers. The third sample of participants for the quantitative survey section were 23 parents and school employees. Sampling methodology used for this study was probabilistic (Bickman & Rog, 2009). Probabilistic sampling was implemented based on a select target population collected from online databases or directories (Bickman & Rog, 2009).

The sampling frames that were used to contact parents, teachers, and administrators were the school's faculty directory and a volunteer request form sent home by teachers. An online directory or database can be used as a sample frame if most or all contact information is included for all participants (Bickman & Rog, 2009). Selection of the participants for this study were conducted using simple random sampling. According to Lohr (2019), "Simple random sampling is when the researcher is in effect mixing up the population before grabbing n units" (p. 26). Participants were assigned a number and randomly selected by using a random number generator. Once the participants were selected, the researcher sent out written invitations in e-mail format to obtain participants' consent that they would like to volunteer in the study. The selection of all participants was based on which participants were available during the school year to complete the interviews, focus groups, and surveys.

The Researcher's Role

In this study, I served as the main instrument for conducting interviews, focus groups, and quantitative surveys. To ensure this multimethod design was implemented correctly, I

developed and maintained a professional disposition with participants in the study. This required me to keep an empathetic frame of mind without passing judgement on a participant's perspective. I needed to listen, be accepting of all participants, and be receptive to how the participants believed the school could work towards better communication between parents and teachers. My role as the researcher was to obtain confidentiality from both parents and teachers without fear of retaliation from opposing viewpoints or school administration. I made it known to all participants that I was not employed with the school district and was only affiliated by my son attending Bayou Elementary School.

My fascination in this study results from years spent teaching in elementary classrooms and endless struggles with communicating to parents about their child's overall academic performance. I am curious to know how much parents and teachers communicate with each other about a student's academics, behavior, and overall well-being. Bayou Elementary School has tried to address communication barriers by providing new methods of contact, but some parents and teachers still find it difficult to connect with each other. I have a son who attends Bayou Elementary School, but I do not work at this school or for the school district, and I do not have any family members or relatives who work in the school district. This research study is important to me both as a mother and an elementary teacher because parents, teachers, and schools can all benefit from productive communication.

Procedures

Before the study was conducted, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval at Liberty University was obtained (see Appendix A). Scheduled meetings with the superintendent and assistant principal were held to receive written permission to conduct the study at Bayou Elementary School (see Appendix B). Once written approval was granted by the assistant

principal, elementary teachers and parents were contacted using the Remind App, e-mail, social media, or the school directory requesting for volunteers to participate in this applied research study. After the required number of interested participants was met, written permission from the administrators, elementary teachers, and parents were obtained to include them in this study (see Appendix C). After the IRB received all necessary permission and consent forms, the researcher began to schedule appointments for the interviews, create an online focus group, and design a quantitative survey. All three collection approaches were conducted within a five-week timespan.

The elementary teacher and administrator interviews were scheduled through an online webinar or e-mail based on the availability of each participant. Each 1-hour interview was voluntary, and the participants could withdraw from the study at any given time. The interviews were digitally recorded using a computer and transcribed using a digital dissertation transcriber software. For the second collection approach, the researcher contacted each parent and teacher to give them a digital link to access the online focus group. The interactive discussion board gave each parent and teacher the opportunity to interact in a virtual group setting while answering questions, sharing their opinions, and conversing about the amount of communication that comes from their child's elementary teacher. All of the participants were encouraged to keep their discussions private, but there was no guarantee of confidentiality since the participation in the study is voluntary, and parents or teachers could withdraw from the study at any time. The transcripts obtained from the focus group were saved as a file on a secure computer.

The third and final collection approach, a quantitative survey, was administered to parents, elementary teachers, and an administrator at Bayou Elementary school. The survey was conducted online using Google Forms that allowed the researcher to create the questions using a

Likert scale. The link to the survey was sent in an e-mail for all participants to complete. Before completing the survey, participants filled out their contact information and role so that the researcher would know who completed the survey. Then, the participants completed the survey and recorded their answers. Once the answers were recorded, the researcher had access to all the answers and was able to analyze the data. All confidential data gathered was securely stored on a password protected computer.

Data Collection and Analysis

Interviews

The first sub-question for this study asked how teachers and administrators in an interview identify potential deficits in communication methods used between parents and teachers at Bayou Elementary School. Bickman and Rog (2009) discuss how telephone interviews are more helpful with collecting data than in-person interviews. The researcher conducted telephone interviews as they were less of a time constraint for school employees and allowed more time for the data to be collected and transcribed versus in-person interviews. Each participant was asked to interview for one hour during their scheduled time.

The data collection strategy used for the interviews was semi-structured, open-ended questions. Semi-structured qualitative data is beneficial for this type of applied research as it provides further reflection of each participant's own thinking and opinions (Dey, 1993). All interviews were recorded on a computer, and all data was backed up on an external hard drive. After all interviews were completed, the data was transcribed through an online transcription database. This method allowed the researcher to further analyze what was discussed and identify if any information needed further explanation from each participant.

The following interview questions guided the semi-structured interviews in this study.

Semi-Structured Interview Open-Ended Questions (Teachers and Principal)

1. What communication methods could be used to provide better communication among elementary teachers and parents?
2. Which type of communication tools do you currently use that provide opportunities for elementary teacher and parent collaboration?
3. Which types of communication are the most effective?
4. How does the school or district handle conflicts with parents and students? Is there a set protocol or guideline that must be followed?
5. What type of professional development or resources are offered for teachers to utilize on communicating with parents?
6. How often are parents asked to attend parent-teacher conferences to discuss student progress?
7. Provide examples of how you would ask parents to be involved at school and home?
8. What setbacks have you encountered when asking parents to communicate, become more involved, or make a donation for classroom supplies?
9. How do you feel when parents contact you about their child's academic achievement or behavior? Can you provide any examples?
10. How does communication among elementary teachers and parents vary based upon each student's needs?

Questions 1 and 2 address the importance of communicating with parents and teachers such as sharing ideas, discussing in respectful conversations, and collaborating with each other (Meiser, 2019). The questions were used to determine the specific types of communication used currently in Bayou Elementary School and whether or not they were effective. They also

identified any possible methods of communication that are not being used, but could potentially work for future use to help aid parental-school partnerships. Fiore (2017) determined that the best methods for communication will aid in preparing parents, teachers, and schools for a collaborative partnership. Questions 3 and 4 were designed to compare different types of communication methods used to see if one specific type worked better than others and how conflict is addressed. Niia et al. (2014) reported that involvement and participation from parents and teachers are multidimensional concepts that can be viewed differently based upon the type of communication. When a discrepancy or conflict arises between parents and teachers, having an action plan to resolve differences will help prevent stakeholders from making hurtful remarks or escalating the situation (Schwanke, 2016). Questions 5 and 6 helped determine how much professional development and resources should be available for parents and understanding that partnerships between parents and teachers are invaluable (Gartmeier et al., 2016). Questions 7 and 8 were used to explore methods that teachers use to get parents communicating and involved as well as any setbacks that could hinder educational outcomes for students (Lepkowska & Nightingale, 2019). Questions 9 and 10 were designed to determine how teachers feel about parents contacting them and if communication varies based upon a student's needs. Parent involvement can vary from each family depending on how they envision partnerships between schools and parents, their time commitments, if they feel valued from the school system, and what the age of their child is (Gonzalez-DeHass, 2019).

Interview data was analyzed through summarizing the data to look for themes or commonalities within the data. The researcher combined answers from each of the participants' concerns regarding communication with parents. The answers were categorized using concept mapping to find possible solutions to the potential problem. According to Bickman and Rog

(2009), concept mapping characterizes common themes to produce theory development, making decisions, or assessments.

Focus Group

The second sub-question for this study identified potential deficits in communication methods used between parents and teachers at Bayou Elementary School. Saltmarsh and McPherson (2019) identified how parental engagement is a responsibility for schools and teachers while for parents they oversee how their child's education is being facilitated. The focus group for parents and teachers was conducted in an online discussion setting where only the researcher and participants were allowed to view and participate in the discussions. The discussions from the focus group were transcribed in writing and non-verbal format to categorize any themes or commonalities within the research.

Focus group data was analyzed through the use of content analysis (Weber, 2015). Content analysis is a methodology that analyzes qualitative data so that themes can be established or categories that are of interest to the researcher can be formed (Haggarty, 1996). The rationale behind using computer-assisted content analysis is based on identifying approaches that aid in reducing the amount of time and expenses needed to complete a focus group (Bickman & Rog, 2009). Parents and teachers at Bayou Elementary School all have different schedules surrounding their jobs and families, which can be challenging when asking for a group meeting to take place during scheduled times. Therefore, implementing an online discussion board made the focus group less stressful for participants as they could choose to participate in the group discussions regarding communicating with elementary teachers.

The following questions were used for the focus groups:

1. What opportunities at Bayou Elementary School allow parents to collaborate with teachers?
2. As a parent or teacher, how often do you try to communicate with each other?
3. When are parents allowed to come into the classroom to visit or observe their child?
4. When are parents not permitted to visit their child in the classroom?
5. As a parent or teacher, how important is communication to you? Why?
6. How does the school ensure that student information is kept confidential between parents and teachers while communicating with each other?
7. Which types of activities do you think Bayou Elementary should allow parents to participate with students at school?
8. Why do you think parents and teachers sometimes struggle with communication?
9. Which type of communication is easiest and most convenient for you?
10. If you could think of one way to help improve communication between parents and teachers, what would that be?

Student achievement should be taking place not just at school, but at home where parents are responsible for their child's well-being (Kim, 2017). From the focus group, questions 1 and 2 were implemented to determine how many activities are offered for parents to become involved and to gain a better idea of how often parents and teachers communicate with each other. The questions provided ideas for opportunities where parents can work with teachers to establish and attain shared goals (Fisher, 2018). For questions 3 and 4, they were presented to determine when parents are permitted and not permitted to visit a child's classroom during instructional hours. Sometimes parents can be limited to the amount of help they can provide at the school (Rattenborg et al., 2019). This could be due to a school or district-wide policy because of

instructional time requirements or safety concerns. Questions 5 and 6 were used to determine how parents and teachers feel about the importance of communication and to discover how teachers at Bayou Elementary School keep student information confidential while communicating with parents such as grades, behavioral concerns, and any feedback that pertains to the student (Kuusimaki et al., 2019). Questions 7 and 8 addressed the importance of interactive dialogue between both stakeholders so that they can benefit from productive collaboration of ideas and needs (Gonzales & Frumkin, 2018). They were designed to determine which specific types of school activities parents should be included in and to discover reasons for why parents and teachers might struggle with communicating. Finally, questions 9 and 10 were implemented to define how good communication is a group effort that allows opportunities for people to share their feelings and experiences so parents and teachers can understand what others think and feel (Tuluhan & Yalcinkaya, 2018). Both questions determined which method of communication works best for parents and teachers and if either stakeholder has recommendations for how communication could be improved upon.

Survey

The third sub-question for this study explored how quantitative survey data would identify potential deficits in communication methods used between parents and teachers at Bayou Elementary School. I administered a quantitative survey using a Likert scale regarding communication between parents and teachers at Bayou Elementary School. The survey was sent in an e-mail to all participants including parents, elementary teachers, and the principal. The link to the survey took each participant to the online survey to complete at their convenience. Once all of the surveys were submitted online, the researcher had access to all of the survey results.

Survey data was analyzed by categorizing responses and mapping them on trend charts to illustrate the frequency of each response. The validity of the responses was assessed to determine if any relationships or trends existed. According to Bickman and Rog (2009), validity is assessed by determining if any relationships or common themes exist. Searching for trends allowed the researcher to pinpoint communication issues that are causing barriers between parents and students as well as solutions to help improve communication and the parental-school partnership.

The following survey questions guided this portion of the study.

On a scale from one to five with one being strongly disagree, three being neutral, and five being strongly agree, rate the following statements:

1. The amount of communication between parents and teachers is satisfactory.

The question is intended to determine whether there is an appropriate amount of communication taking place between parents and teachers, which has been found to be a vital part of practice that can help contribute to student success (Rouse & O'Brien, 2017).

2. The use of electronic or social media methods of communication at Bayou

Elementary School improve overall communication between parents and teachers.

The traditional method of communication such as letters going home is becoming replaced by technology (Chena & Chena, 2015). This question addressed whether parents, teachers, or principals feel that electronic communication methods help improve communication and involvement.

3. The current communication methods at Bayou Elementary School are effective at relaying all necessary information between parents and the classroom.

The question identified the effectiveness of the communication methods between teachers and parents, which should be determined to improve community partnerships between teachers, parents, and schools (Bagin & Gallagher, 2001).

4. Paper and written methods of communication are sufficient to keep parents informed.

Allowing parents the opportunity to know what each child is doing inside the classroom gives them validation as to why the activities their children are doing are important (Bacigalupa, 2016). This question determined whether paper or written communication methods work well at Bayou Elementary School.

5. Face to face communication would improve parental understanding on classroom activities and student progress.

This question addressed whether in-person or face to face communication would increase the amount of parental knowledge to prevent conflict or misunderstanding. Discrepancies between parents and teachers tend to happen when an in-person meeting discusses sensitive topics about a student such as academic concerns or behavioral issues (Tveit, 2018).

6. Improvements need to be made towards communication between parents and teachers at Bayou Elementary School.

In order for students, teachers, and parents to feel appreciated, there needs to be a multi-systemic approach to cultivate a partnership (Allen & Kern, 2019). This question identified whether the stakeholders believe that improvements in communication at Bayou Elementary School need to be made.

7. In-person observation within the classroom during instructional time would be beneficial for parents to monitor their child's progress.

This question elicited how valuable the participants feel that in-person observations are and whether that would help parents understand what their child is learning. The benefit of in-person observations will provide exchanging of ideas, values, and wisdom between parents and teachers (Schneider & Arnot, 2018).

8. Sufficient examples of completed work are sent home to allow parents to judge their child's progress.

This question determined whether parents and teachers think that enough information regarding a student's academic performance is being presented to families at home. Sharing data on a student's progress allows parents to feel involved and part of an educational partnership (Hadley & Rouse, 2018).

9. Children are given the appropriate amount of homework.

One of the struggles that parents may encounter with their children is completing homework (Epstein, 2018). This question addressed whether the participants feel that there needs to be more or less homework for students after school to reinforce what was taught.

10. Parents are given adequate notifications regarding their child's behavior at school.

This question identified whether teachers, parents, and administrators felt that enough information is being communicated with families about a child's positive or negative behavior in school. Bryce et al. (2019) shared the importance of encouraging positive learning behaviors at school with parents.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher procured IRB approval prior to any data collection of participants to ensure their safety and the safety of my sponsoring institution, Liberty University. Before any information was collected from participants, consent forms were distributed to all participants

explaining my role as the researcher and their role as the participants in this study. In the consent forms, each participant had the option to withdraw themselves from the research study at any time. I used all data strictly for this research study and provided pseudonyms to keep participants and the school location confidential. All personal data was securely stored on my computer using a password combination. Data will be kept per the IRB for at least two years.

Summary

Chapter Three provided an applied multimethod design, which includes both qualitative and quantitative methods involving an interview, a focus group, and a survey. The researcher examined the following issue and potential solutions to the research question: How do communication methods between elementary teachers and parents impact educational outcomes at Bayou Elementary School?

This applied research study took place at Bayou Elementary School in northwest Louisiana. The first collection approach, interviews, were conducted through an online webinar with teachers and administrators during a reserved time so that the conversation could be recorded and transcribed. The second collection approach, a focus group, was done through an interactive discussion board with parents whose children attend Bayou Elementary School and teachers at Bayou Elementary School. The third and final collection approach, a quantitative survey, was conducted using an online survey program for parents, teachers, and administrators. Participants for the applied research study were only invited to volunteer in the research study if they represented Bayou Elementary School as a teacher, administrator, or parent. All the participants needed to give consent that they are comfortable with the research methods and they understood that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

The design of the research project included a total of five weeks for participants to complete all interviews, the focus group, and quantitative surveys. All data from the three collection approaches including transcripts, recordings, and survey submissions were analyzed for commonalities and themes. Constraints and limitations between parents and teachers were used as the foundation for examination of the themes. Parent and teacher data were compared to determine potential solutions for communication issues that may exist. In Chapter Four, the results for this applied multimethod research study are provided.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to identify teacher and parental communication methods that could impact educational outcomes at Bayou Elementary School, inform the administration whether or not issues are found, and offer possible recommendations. The problem of this study was that there are potential deficits in communication methods used between parents and teachers that could have an impact on student performance. This chapter provides a written account of participants who were interviewed, attended online focus groups, and surveyed. Collection of data was conducted over a four-week time span and analyzed. Results from the interviews, focus groups, and survey are discussed. The data is presented in themes which include tables, graphs, and charts. Findings from sub-question one, “How do teachers and administrators in an interview identify effective communication methods at Bayou Elementary School,” are included and discussed with narrative themes. Findings from sub-question two, “How do parents and teachers in a focus group identify effective communication methods at Bayou Elementary School,” are presented and also include themes generated from the focus groups. Findings from sub-question three, “How do quantitative survey data identify effective communication methods between parents and teachers at Bayou Elementary School,” were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency tables, and percentages. Common themes were presented using graphs.

Participants

This applied research study consisted of a multimethod design which included qualitative and quantitative methodology. Participants in this study were selected through simple random sampling to ensure there was a diverse representation of parents and teachers at Bayou

Elementary School. A total of 44 participants were included for either the interview, focus group, or survey in this study. All three data collection methods included participants who met specific requirements to partake in the research. Participants' identities were kept anonymous using pseudonyms for privacy and protection. Demographic data was collected from the interview participants but was not needed for the focus groups or quantitative survey as the information was not pertinent to the study.

Interview

Ten employees working at Bayou Elementary School were interviewed for this study including eight elementary teachers and two administrators. All participants chose to complete an online interview instead of face-to-face interviews due to school district policies implemented during the coronavirus pandemic. The criteria for participants who volunteered to interview were that they must be certified educators or administrators who are employed at Bayou Elementary School. All interviews with participants were recorded and transcribed online to ensure accuracy. Each participant was given a copy of their interview questions and individual responses in case any changes needed to be made. The demographic information of the interview participants is included in Table 1.

Table 1*Demographics of Interview Participants*

| Participant | Gender | Years at Bayou Elementary | Years at Another School | Total Years of Teaching |
|----------------|--------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Educator One | F | 8 | 17 | 25 |
| Educator Two | F | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| Educator Three | F | 4 | 6 | 10 |
| Educator Four | F | 3 | 10 | 13 |
| Educator Five | F | 5 | 10 | 15 |
| Educator Six | F | 2 | 12 | 14 |
| Educator Seven | F | 3 | 7 | 10 |
| Educator Eight | F | 6 | 2 | 8 |
| Educator Nine | F | 1 | 10 | 11 |
| Educator Ten | F | 4 | 12 | 16 |

Educator One

The first interview participant met the requirements to participate in this study because she has worked at BES as a teacher and curriculum coach for seven years. She is currently serving as one of two administrators at BES. Before entering her current position, she taught third through eighth grade for 17 years in the district. Due to 25 years of service in education, the participant understood the impact that communication between parents and teachers can have on a student's life. Educator One described that when parents and teachers communicate and work together "it benefits the student tremendously." She also elaborated on the importance of parental involvement at the school. When parents do not choose to participate through involvement or

communication, she said it can “make things difficult when the parental support is not there.” Educator One stated that communication between parents and teachers is tailored to what each child needs at the time. She commended Bayou Elementary teachers for “their hard work and accommodations” they provide to all students regardless of their needs.

Educator Two

The second interview participant met the requirements to participate in this study because she teaches as an English language instructor at BES for kindergarten through fifth grade. She is currently working on her master’s degree in educational leadership at a nearby institution. Before her current position, she previously taught second through fourth grade including English learners. Educator Two shared that she believes in the effectiveness of face-to-face communication between parents and teachers because data can be shown easily and they feel “more comfortable asking questions and engaging in the conversation.” When asked about how frequent communication should occur between parents and teachers, she said that she believes teachers “should make contact with each parent at least once every nine weeks.” Educator Two reiterated the importance of communicating with parents whose children are struggling “academically or behaviorally” in the classroom. If a student is exhibiting academic or behavior hardships, she championed the importance of “addressing the struggles early” in an effort to resolve the concerns in a timely manner. She emphasized that “parents are eager to support their children,” but there are some families who do not have the time or want to “put in the effort” to communicate with teachers and schools.

Educator Three

The third interview participant met the requirements to participate in this study because she has taught at BES for four years. Prior to teaching at BES, the participant taught for six years

including second through fifth grade. Educator Three focused on the importance of “encouraging parents to read with their child daily” and to review and discuss graded assignments with them to determine if improvements should be made. She shared that some students do not have school supplies even after “sending parents a note” to request the materials needed. Further, Educator Three stated some parents “repeatedly do not check binders for important notes” or messages on their phones or computers to schedule conferences. When parents contact her about their child, Educator Three said she was “pleased because it shows that they are involved and care” about their child’s behavior or academics.

Educator Four

The fourth interview participant met the requirements to participate in this study because she currently teaches second grade at BES. Her previous experience included teaching elementary school in the district for 10 years. Educator Four explained that messaging apps, e-mails, phone calls, and notebooks were examples of effective communication methods for teachers and parents. She included examples of ways that parents could be involved with their children at home and in school. Educator Four noted that she was “hopeful to make needed changes” when parents contact her about academic or behavior concerns. When asked about whether communication varies among teachers and parents, she expressed that it depends upon whether “a student is struggling,” as they are the children who require the most attention.

Educator Five

The fifth interview participant met the requirements to participate in this study because she has served as an instructional coach for five years at BES and is currently serving as an administrator. The participant has 15 years of teaching in the district and believes in the value that both parents and teachers can bring to a child’s academic success. Educator Five advised

that communicating with parents must be done using various methods such as “paper letters, social media, e-mail, phone calls, and messaging apps.” She shared that there are learning resources and opportunities for teachers to utilize on communication with parents. Educator Five expressed her appreciation for the parental involvement at Bayou Elementary including the “Parent Teacher League” that helps parents with volunteer opportunities such as book fairs, field day, and participating in their school improvement plan. As an administrator, she encouraged that parents feel free to contact their child’s teacher or her if needed to ensure they are meeting students’ needs.

Educator Six

The sixth participant met the requirements to participate in this study because she is currently teaching kindergarten students who have been diagnosed with moderate Autism Spectrum Disorder at BES. The participant has 14 years of classroom experience and earned a master’s degree in Special Education. Educator Six shared that various communication tools such as “home notices, e-mails, texting, and car line” have all proven to be the easiest and most efficient methods of communicating between parents and teachers. She emphasized the importance of “utilizing multiple means of communication” such as sending notes home, phone calls to parents, and text messaging to increase parental involvement. Educator Six expressed how she feels “confident and enthusiastic” when contacted by her students’ parents. She tries to keep detailed data on each child such as “academic progress, behavior notes, and assessments” to share with parents about the progress students have made.

Educator Seven

The seventh participant met the requirements to participate in this study because she currently teaches fifth grade science and social studies at BES. This is her third year teaching at

BES, and she has 10 years of classroom experience in the district. Educator Seven believed that communication methods for parents and teachers such as the “school app, e-mail, and phone” were the most effective sources of communication currently being implemented at Bayou Elementary. When asking parents for a conference to discuss student progress, she mentioned that she “tries to have a conference every nine weeks” or at least every semester. Educator Seven discussed ways for parents to become involved with the school such as “attending school events, volunteering in the PTL, or reading the classroom newsletter” that shares different ways parents can get involved.

Educator Eight

The eighth participant met the requirements to participate in this study because she teaches students with moderate to severe special needs in grades kindergarten through fifth grade at BES. This participant has taught at BES for six years and has a master’s degree in special education. Educator Eight explained that if parents want to be involved with their child’s school, they should “check folders, return signed papers, help students study, or volunteer at the school.” One setback that she encountered when asking parents to communicate is trying to make contact with them or to get in touch with a parent. Educator Eight expressed that more communication seems to happen in kindergarten through second grade but not as often starting in third grade.

Educator Nine

The ninth participant met the requirements to participate in this study because she serves as an instructional coach at BES. Previously, she taught elementary school grades kindergarten through fifth in the district and has over 10 years of classroom experience. She has a master’s degree in education and supports professional development for teachers and parents. Educator Nine emphasized the need for “apps, platforms, and technology” and that they serve as a “vessel

for effective communication.” However, she felt that sometimes they are “lacking the actual communication skills” that are necessary to be effective communicators. Educator Nine reported that they need “more training” on being positive and effective communicators. When she communicates with parents, she said the most effective method is when “we speak with a solution seeking” purpose.

Educator Ten

The tenth participant met the requirements to participate in this study because she currently teaches fourth grade at BES. Before teaching at BES, the participant taught reading and English in grades sixth through eighth in the district. She has over 15 years of teaching experience and has a graduate degree in education. Educator ten believed that “our world is technology driven,” so most parents are able to communicate with teachers with electronic devices. She emphasized that when teachers communicate with parents, they should “properly document the student’s behavior or academic concerns” that need to be addressed. Educator Ten shared that when parents want to communicate with her, it lets her know that “they definitely care about their child’s progress” in school.

Focus Group

The two focus groups consisted of six parents whose children attend Bayou Elementary and five teachers who work at Bayou Elementary. The teacher group consisted of five females, and they had an average of 22 years of teaching experience as a group. The parent group included five females and one male. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the two focus groups were conducted in a private online discussion forum where they were allowed to share their opinions and provide responses to each question. Each focus group was asked 10 questions, and all participants interacted and responded to each other.

Survey

The quantitative survey was distributed via e-mail to the teachers and parents who volunteered and were selected to be a part of the study. The teachers had to be employed at Bayou Elementary, and the parents had to have a child attending Bayou Elementary. A total of 23 participants completed the survey; 11 were educators, and 14 were parents. No demographic data was collected from the participants of the survey as it was not relevant to the purpose of this research.

Results

The purpose of this applied research study was to identify teacher and parental communication methods that could impact educational outcomes at Bayou Elementary School, inform the administration whether or not issues were found, and offer possible recommendations. For this applied study, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to collect data. Findings from the research study have been sectioned into three sub-questions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight teachers and two administrators to find themes related to parent and teacher communication at Bayou Elementary School in northwest Louisiana. Several themes emerged from the qualitative analysis of the interviews. Following the completion of the interviews, two separate focus groups were conducted with one exclusively for teachers and the other for parents. Themes related to parent and school communication at Bayou Elementary were presented by both focus groups. Finally, a quantitative survey was administered to learn about the communication methods between parents and teachers that could impact student outcomes. The survey results were used to suggest any areas of improvement within Bayou Elementary regarding parent and teacher communication.

Sub-question 1

Sub-question one for this study was, “How do teachers and administrators in an interview identify effective communication methods at Bayou Elementary School?” Interviews were conducted with teachers and administrators to find themes related to parent and teacher communication at Bayou Elementary School. The interviews were held via online or through the telephone due to COVID-19 health policies enforced by the school district. The themes uncovered in the qualitative analysis were identified as contributing factors of parent and teacher communication including parental involvement, student needs, and communication methods. The researcher used NVivo for open-coding to identify possible themes from the responses of teachers and administrators at Bayou Elementary. The codes and frequency of codes specific to these themes are included in Table 2.

Table 2*Frequency of Codes from Interviews*

| Codes | Frequency |
|---------------|-----------|
| Parents | 70 |
| School | 48 |
| Child | 42 |
| App | 35 |
| Phone | 27 |
| Teachers | 22 |
| Email | 19 |
| Home | 14 |
| Conference | 10 |
| Administrator | 7 |
| Homework | 7 |
| Papers | 6 |
| Social | 6 |
| Academic | 5 |

The codes in Table 2 were used by the researcher to establish themes from the qualitative teacher and administrator interviews. To identify the themes, codes that shared commonalities were placed into separate groups. Three themes emerged from the codes, which are included in Table 3.

Table 3*Interview Codes Grouped into Themes*

| Parental Involvement | Student Needs | Communication Methods |
|----------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Parents | Child | App |
| School | Behavior | Phone |
| Teachers | Homework | Email |
| Home | Social | Conference |
| Administrator | Academic | Papers |

The themes that were constructed (see Table 3) from the qualitative interviews at Bayou Elementary provided further understanding of the factors that influence parent and teacher communication. The researcher used open-ended questions that allowed the opportunity for

teachers and administrators to elaborate on how communication between parents and teachers can have an impact on student success. Although each participant shared their preferences on what they valued most when communicating with parents, it was beneficial to see that they all believed communication between parents and teachers is important towards student outcomes. The themes from the qualitative interviews were ordered based on the results of the frequency distribution. The three main themes were parental involvement, student needs, and communication methods.

Parental Involvement

The importance of having parental involvement from parents at Bayou Elementary was consistently discussed with each teacher and administrator in the interview. All of the participants emphasized that teachers should be focused on communicating with parents every day to help students succeed. Each of the participants suggested that more involvement from some parents would be beneficial. Educator One explained,

Occasionally, there are a handful of parents who do not communicate at all and do not want to participate in conferences. It makes it very difficult when the parental support is not there. Some parents do not like to communicate via electronics, but also never to seem to read the paper messages that are sent.

When asked what setbacks they have encountered when asking parents to communicate or become involved, Educator Two stated, “There are some parents who do not have the time or do not want to do the extra work. In those times, I find ways to help the students more at school or give them an alternative support system.” Educator Three said, “Some parents each year repeatedly do not check binders for papers, respond to messages via the messaging app, or show up for scheduled parent conferences.” Educator Four believed that offering a variety

of examples for parents to be involved with their children could help facilitate communication between parents and teachers. Educator Five explained,

We have encountered obstacles when reaching out to parents. Not all parents have technology at our school like we assume others do. When reaching out to parents sometimes they are working many hours and are unable to be as involved as we would like.

When discussing the concerns with parents who choose to not communicate, Educator Six confirmed that she confides in her colleagues for advice and ideas when handling communication concerns to know the best way to address the parents. When parents decide to contact teachers, Educator Seven commented how she feels “happy when parents choose to communicate” regardless of whether it is to share good news or express concerns about a grade they received. Educator Eight shared, “I tend to stop seeing parents communicating as much starting in third grade, which is concerning as a teacher.” Educator Nine discussed setbacks in communication by adding,

I have experienced setbacks with parents when I have failed to make a connection with them at the beginning of the year. It is vital to make a positive connection with parents before asking for more involvement with their child and school.

Educator Ten concluded,

Parents sometimes have different schedules than their child due to work; therefore, they are not available to communicate or help. Some do not have the extra funds. I have to be aware that my students come from different backgrounds and homes, so I will not receive the same response from every parent.

All of the interview participants acknowledged that each family is different, and their amount

of communication with parents changes consistently.

Student Needs

The second theme that emerged from the interviews was meeting student needs. All of the teachers and administrators discussed the importance of communication with parents to help students achieve their academic goals. Educator One stated in the interview, “The communication between teachers and parents is very tailored to what each child needs at the time. Elementary teachers are very hard working and the most accommodating to an individual child’s needs.” Educator Two commented, “If a child has an academic or behavioral struggle, there tends to be a lot more communication. It is very important to catch these concerns early on so that they can be resolved in a timely manner.” The interview participants genuinely believe that each student and their families deserve time to address and voice their concerns. Educator Three discussed that there is a correlation between uninvolved parents and poor academics. Further, the participant shared, “I have found that the parents who are involved in their child’s learning and communicate with the teacher are more successful and show more growth throughout the year than parents who don’t communicate or get involved.” However, some of the participants remarked that certain parents may require more communication with their child’s teacher than other families. Educator Four explained how communication can differ based on a student’s needs by saying, “Whether it’s behavior or academics, those students with the biggest needs get the most communication. I do make sure to give positive communication for those other students, but still not at the amount of those struggling.” Educator Five informed the researcher,

Communication is often based on what will help the child the most. For example, if a child is having an issue with behavior and praise works to help the child behave better,

we often use positive notes and phone calls home. For other children calling home for praise does not meet that child's need on changing an action.

Educator Six emphasized on how communication varies with parents by sharing,

Students who have a special need may require more extensive or frequent communication, whether it be a health, behavioral, or academic need. Parents of students who are academically advanced may communicate more often with teachers to ensure their child is getting everything he or she needs in the classroom and may check more frequently on progress.

Educator Seven explained, “Students that need a lot of support or special needs usually need more communication.” When teachers are contacting parents about a student’s academics or behavior, Educator Eight felt that it is imperative for the teacher to have data readily available to show a student’s progress or regression. Educator Nine stated, “At the elementary level, communication varies depending on the student's needs, such as academic needs, health needs, behavioral needs, and language barrier needs. I have worked at all levels of schools including elementary through high school, but the elementary level is when you see the most communication.” Educator Ten concluded by sharing,

If a student has an academic or behavioral concern that needs to be addressed, sometimes an email isn't going to be enough to make changes. A teacher has to be flexible and assess every situation differently based on that parent and student.

The interview participants all shared that communication with parents can result in a positive outcome for meeting students’ needs.

Communication Methods

Implementing and understanding the multiple types of communication methods at Bayou

Elementary emerged as the third theme from the teacher and administrator interviews. Educator One elaborated,

The best form of communication that we use at Bayou Elementary are the classroom apps. The school app allows for collaboration between the teacher and parent and the school and the parent. When this is not available, we also try to convey information out via newsletters and on social media.

Educator Two explained, “Electronic communications are the fastest and easiest way to communicate. However, face-to-face communication seems to be the most effective because data can be shown easily and parents feel more comfortable asking questions and engaging in the conversation.” When asked about the frequency of using parent-teacher conferences, Educator Three stated, “When discussing daily progress with parents, teachers use the smartphone messaging app, email, or paper notes sent home. However, parent-teacher conferences are only required if a child’s grade drops below a C or repeated behavior problems occur.” Educator Four felt that parent-teacher conferences vary based on the students’ academic and behavioral needs, which can range from four to eight times a school year. Educator Five shared,

When communicating with parents you must be able to do so in different ways. The school and teachers must reach out using paper letters, social media, email, phone calls, and our school app. Knowing how important communication is drives our reasoning behind using so many avenues.”

Educator Six commented,

I send home notices, emails, texts through the school app, and make phone calls. I see parents in the car line as well to communicate with them quickly. I think texting through an approved app has proven to be the easiest and most efficient method of

communication. A working email address and phone calls are good forms of communication as well when needed.

Parent-teacher conferences were felt to be highly valuable to Educator Seven and shared that, “When other methods of communication are not working, parent-teacher conferences can be set up each semester. Sharing the knowledge directly with parents can be helpful as they may not understand it through electronic communication methods.” Educator Eight elaborated,

There are multiple methods of communication that teachers use at Bayou Elementary, so it should be fairly easy for teachers to get in touch with parents. The communication methods that educators use frequently include the school app, email, phone, and written communication home.

When asked to share about methods of communication that may need improvement, some of the interview participants felt that there was a need for further professional development. Educator Nine explained,

I believe that we have all of the apps, platforms, and technology that we need to use as a vessel for effective communication. However, at times we are lacking the actual communication skills necessary to be effective communicators. We need more training on being positive and effective communicators with parents.

Educator Ten concluded the interview by saying,

Our world is technology driven, so most parents/guardians have a phone or computer of some sort. I have found that the best way to communicate with them is through an app. I prefer Class Dojo because it is instant communication for behavior and any other classroom announcements. A phone call is another good form of communication because it is good for a parent to hear your voice, the tone of the conversation, and it leaves little

room for miscommunication/doubt.

All of the teachers and administrators who interviewed felt that communication methods are only effective when both parents and teachers collaborate and work together.

Sub-question 2

Sub-question two for this study was, “How do parents and teachers in a focus group identify effective communication methods at Bayou Elementary School?” The first focus group included five teachers who work at Bayou Elementary School. The second focus group included six parents whose children attend Bayou Elementary School. Both focus groups were kept separate to help encourage participation and keep the participants comfortable. The focus groups were conducted online in a secured discussion forum and were recorded for transcription. The researcher asked open-ended questions to allow for the parent and teacher participants to converse with one another in their groups simultaneously before any follow up questions took place. The teacher and parent focus group codes along with their respective frequencies are listed in Table 4 and Table 5.

Table 4*Frequency of Codes for Teacher Focus Group*

| Codes | Frequency |
|-----------------|-----------|
| Parents | 73 |
| School | 24 |
| Teacher | 24 |
| Students | 22 |
| Communication | 14 |
| App | 12 |
| COVID-19 | 10 |
| Time | 10 |
| Positive | 9 |
| Classroom | 8 |
| Confidentiality | 8 |

The data collected from the focus groups were reviewed using the same format as the interviews to discover themes related to parent and teacher communication. The researcher used NVivo to find codes and potential themes.

Table 5*Frequency of Codes for Parent Focus Group*

| Codes | Frequency |
|------------------|-----------|
| Parents | 25 |
| Teachers | 22 |
| Communication | 21 |
| Students | 19 |
| Knowledge | 16 |
| School | 14 |
| Classroom | 10 |
| Special Events | 10 |
| Allowed to Visit | 9 |
| Jobs | 8 |
| Behavior | 7 |
| COVID-19 | 7 |
| Time Allowed | 7 |

Once the data was analyzed, the researcher discovered that the codes for both the teacher and parent focus groups shared some commonalities with each other. Similar to the interviews, the codes were used to create themes that help compile the concepts from both the parent and teacher focus groups. The developed themes are pertinent to the further understanding of how both teachers and parents share similar and different views of communication and involvement at Bayou Elementary School. Although the majority of the codes analyzed were found to be positive, there were a few codes that shared negative views of parent and teacher communication. Tables 6 and 7 display the teacher and parent codes from the two focus groups that are grouped into respective themes.

Table 6

Teacher Focus Group Codes Grouped into Themes

| Parent Opportunities | School Atmosphere | Communication Benefits |
|----------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| Parents | School | Communication |
| Teacher | Students | App |
| Classroom | COVID-19 | Confidentiality |
| | Time | Positive |

Parent Opportunities

All of the participants from the teacher focus group felt that parent opportunities were vital to a student's success, which formed the first theme. When asked to share the various opportunities for parents to collaborate with teachers, Teacher One stated, "Most teachers send home parent questionnaires for parents to fill out at the beginning of the school year. This is a great strategy to find out the needs, concerns, and interests of each student." Teacher Two explained, "At our annual back-to-school night, we invite parents to come ask questions or

inform us of any issues they feel are important for the teacher to know about their child.”

Teacher Three felt that the teachers from Bayou Elementary enjoy having parents help around the school because it establishes trust and a positive relationship. Teacher Four elaborated, “Our school has always encouraged a strong teacher and parent partnership. We have opportunities such as being room parents, classroom volunteers, and joining the PTL.” Teacher Five concluded by saying, “I agree with the other teachers, and I believe that it is important for parents to be a part of the decision-making process for their child concerning academic and social interactions in the classroom.” The teachers in the focus group wanted to clarify that all parents are normally offered in-school opportunities to work with them and their children, but due to the pandemic, the school district did not allow visitation from parents this school year.

School Atmosphere

The second theme that evolved from the teacher focus group was establishing and maintaining a professional school atmosphere. When asked if there was anything they would like to improve in their school regarding communication, Teacher One replied,

I think the biggest reminder that parents need to hear from the school environment is that they are their child’s largest advocate. Teachers cannot get upset or hurt if a parent comes to us with a concern about their child.

Teacher Two shared, “I value working for a school that encourages parent and teacher conferences. If possible, having school conferences after each semester would help us better understand how teachers and parents can meet students’ needs.” Teacher Three agreed with Teacher Two and added,

I like the idea of parent and teacher conferences, but think it would be even better if we had them once a week. We tried to implement this concept last year and those parents

who attended developed an appreciation for our service and commitment to their children.

Due to COVID-19, all of the teachers felt that the school atmosphere and their schedules had significantly changed due to health restrictions. Teacher Four commented, “Right now with the pandemic, parents are not allowed to visit and we have strict schedules that limit the time we used to have for volunteer opportunities.” Teacher Five added,

Normally, parents are invited into the classroom for parties and grade-level activities.

Also, parents are always welcome to eat lunch in the cafeteria with their children, but due to COVID, parents are restricted, and we are required to eat lunch in our classrooms.

The teacher participants felt the time constraints and restrictions from the pandemic have been a challenge for everyone but are hopeful that next school year there will be more normalcy to their schedules and school community.

Communication Benefits

The teacher participants all believed that there are communication benefits when collaborating with parents, which led to the third and final theme of the teacher focus group. When asked how often they attempt to contact parents, Teacher One stated, “I try to send an e-mail or a note at least twice a week. In addition, I will call parents on the phone at least twice a semester.” Teacher Two shared, “I communicate daily by reaching out to parents through our school app and send individual text messages to let them know of things going on in the classroom.” Teacher Three commented, “We use our school app to communicate with parents quickly through a text-like interface.” When asked to share the most convenient type of communication, Teacher Four said, “I am very pleased with the school app that we are utilizing so far because it leaves a good trail of documentation and keeps our conversations private.”

However, Teacher Five preferred to call parents on the phone.

I wish I could call all the time because I enjoy hearing the voice of the parents and students. It allows me to keep a positive relationship with them and possibly prevent any misunderstandings from a text message on the app or a note home.

Despite the different preferences in communication, all of the teacher participants felt that it was important for teachers to not just contact parents about concerns but also to share positive news about their child.

Table 7

Parent Focus Group Codes Grouped into Themes

| Parent Opportunities | Communication Benefits | Setbacks |
|----------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Parents | Communication | Allowed to Visit |
| Teachers | School | Jobs |
| Students | Knowledge | COVID-19 |
| Classroom | Special Events | Time Allowed |
| | Behavior | |

Parent Opportunities

The participants from the parent focus group emphasized the importance of parent opportunities and involvement, which evolved into the first theme. When asked what opportunities at Bayou Elementary allow parents to collaborate with teachers, Parent One said, “One opportunity is that parents can work with teachers through the Parent Teacher League, or PTL. Also, they can offer their support by serving on behavioral committees and working with students who have individualized education plans.” Parent Two commented, “Prior to COVID-19, parents were invited to monthly parent and teacher leadership meetings. Also, parents are

encouraged to e-mail and send text messages to the teachers through the school app.” Parent Three explained, “I feel that the methods currently in place are sufficient for parent and teacher communication. If I have a question or concern, I can send an e-mail or message through the app and I always get a prompt response.” When asked about when parents are not allowed to visit their child in the classroom, Parent Four shared, “Parents are not allowed to visit their children’s classroom during normal learning hours or testing.” Parent Five elaborated, “Parents are not allowed to visit their children during the school day or testing. However, COVID-19 restrictions have made this much more difficult this school year.” Parent Six concluded that they agreed with the other parents and added, “We are not allowed to go into the classroom unless there is a special event or invitation from the teacher.” The participants of the parent focus group were in agreement that despite not being allowed to visit their child’s class, they value communication from the teacher and knowing what their children are learning in school.

Communication Benefits

The second theme that evolved from the parent focus group was communication benefits. When asked about how often they try to communicate with teachers, Parent One stated, “I communicate with my child’s teachers everyday through the behavior log, but also feel comfortable with e-mailing, texting, or calling them if the need ever arises.” Parent Two commented, “I communicate daily with my child’s teacher through the behavior charts and weekly regarding any of my concerns.” Parent Three agreed and also shared, “I communicate weekly with the teacher about graded papers in case I need to know what skills my child can improve on while at home.” When asked about how the school keeps student information confidential between parents and teachers while communicating, Parent Four explained,

The teachers never mention or discuss others children outside of their family. However,

there might be special circumstances where they might have to mention another child if they are involved in a conflict or altercation with your child.

Parent Five added, “Due to their knowledge and training, teachers follow confidentiality laws when communicating with parents. Also, when sending class messages through the school app, the teachers never include any of the children’s names.” Parent Six concluded, “I have not been in a situation where a teacher has spoken to me about any other child than my own.” All of the parent focus group participants believed that the teachers at Bayou Elementary School are educated and trained on how to communicate with parents.

Setbacks

Most of the parent participants in the focus group felt that there are current setbacks in communication between parents and teachers at Bayou Elementary School. Parent One stated, “Sometimes communication can be hard between parents and teachers because parents do not always know the best approach to sharing their feelings without hurting the teacher or adding further stress to their day.” Parent Two defended teachers by sharing, “Teachers are busy and have opportunities to communicate outside of school hours, which is their family time. They should not have to take their personal time to communicate with parents.” Parent Three commented,

Some parents get offended with teachers when they hear their child has not behaved well because they have busy jobs and do not want to hear complaints. They think their children are perfect and never do wrong, so instead they tend to blame teachers.

When asked about one way to help improve communication between parents and teachers, Parent Four stated, “I think communication at Bayou Elementary is top notch. However, one recommendation I have is for teachers to be given time to facilitate communication during school

hours.” Parent Five felt differently by explaining, “I feel that communication is lacking in my child’s case this year due to COVID-19. There has been minimal feedback this year on our child’s progress from his classroom teacher.” Parent Six ended by saying, “I believe that communication this year has been handled well considering the COVID restrictions and minimal opportunities for parents to attend classroom events.” Despite some of the differing views on the setbacks in communication, all of the parent participants felt that the pandemic was the main cause for the changes in communication.

Sub-question 3

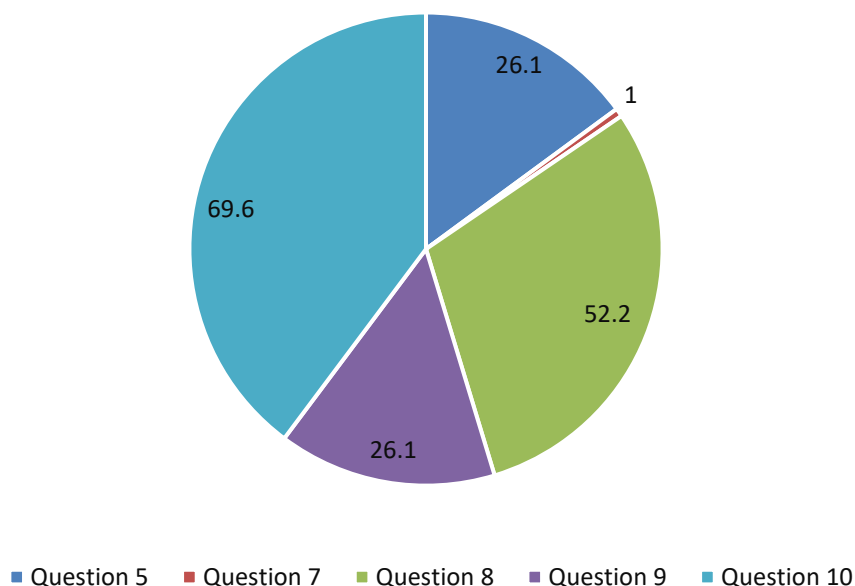
Sub-question three for this study was, “How do quantitative survey data identify effective communication methods between parents and teachers at Bayou Elementary School?” A quantitative survey link with 10 open-ended questions was e-mailed to the teachers and parents who volunteered to complete the survey. All 10 questions were distributed in a Likert-scale model with answers ranged from 1 to 5, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree. The researcher received completed surveys from 11 educators and 14 parents who either teach at Bayou Elementary or have a child attending school there. The responses from each participant are presented in Appendix H. From the quantitative survey, the researcher formulated themes surrounding parent and teacher communication. The frequency and average responses from the survey questions are included in Table 8.

Table 8*Frequency and Average of Survey Results*

| Question | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Communication between parents and teachers is satisfactory. | 0 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 14 |
| | | 13% | 4.3% | 21.7% | 60.9% |
| Electronic resources improve communication. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 16 |
| | | | | 30.4% | 69.6% |
| Current communication methods are effective at relaying information. | 0 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 14 |
| | | 4.3% | 17.4% | 17.4% | 60.9% |
| Written methods of communication are sufficient at keeping parents informed. | 1 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 7 |
| | 4.3% | 21.7% | 30.4% | 13% | 30.4% |
| Face-to-face communication would improve parental understanding. | 1 | 1 | 2 | 13 | 6 |
| | 4.3% | 4.3% | 8.7% | 56.5% | 26.1% |
| Improvements in communication need to be made. | 8 | 6 | 3 | 5 | 1 |
| | 34.8% | 26.1% | 13% | 21.7% | 4.3% |
| Parent observations or classroom visits would help monitor student progress. | 11 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 1 |
| | 47.8% | 17.4% | 21.7% | 12% | 1% |
| Sufficient graded work is sent home to parents. | 1 | 0 | 4 | 6 | 12 |
| | 4.3% | | 17.4% | 26.1% | 52.2% |
| Students are given appropriate amounts of homework. | 0 | 2 | 9 | 6 | 6 |
| | | 8.7% | 39.1% | 26.1% | 26.1% |
| Parents are given adequate notifications of their child's behavior. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 16 |
| | | | | 30.4% | 69.6% |

Parental and Teacher Commitment

The data was analyzed by survey questions grouped together that shared commonalities of parental and teacher commitment and how both stakeholders work together to help provide student support. Twenty-six percent of participants strongly agreed that face-to-face communication would improve parental understanding on classroom activities and student progress. However, only 1% of the participants strongly felt that in-person observation within the classroom during instructional time would be beneficial for parents to monitor their child's progress. Additionally, 52% of the participants strongly agreed that sufficient examples of completed work are sent home to allow parents to judge their child's progress, while 26% of the participants strongly felt that children are given the appropriate amount of homework. Significantly, 70% of the participants strongly agreed that parents are given adequate notifications regarding their child's behavior at school. These numbers are indicative of the varying viewpoints and preferences towards teacher and parent engagement and their interactions with students in the classroom and at home. Overall, the perceptions towards the current methods of involvement for parents and teachers can be positive and are not causing a hindrance towards student outcomes (see Figure 3).

Figure 3*Parental and Teacher Commitment Survey Response*

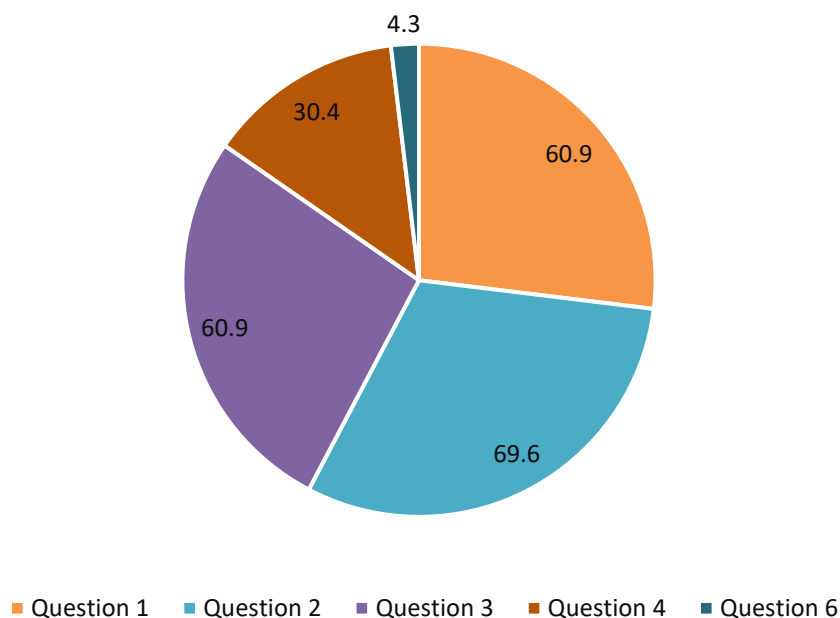
Mechanisms of Communication

The second theme from the survey data showed the various mechanisms of communication that teachers and parents use to discuss information about students. Sixty-one percent of the participants strongly agreed that the amount of communication between parents and teachers is satisfactory. In addition, 70% of participants strongly believe that the use of electronic or social media methods of communication improve overall communication between parents and teachers. Sixty-one percent of the participants strongly agreed that the current communication methods are effective at relaying all necessary information between parents and the classroom, while 30% of the participants strongly felt that paper and written methods of communication are sufficient to keeping parents informed. Lastly, only 4% of participants strongly agreed that improvements need to be made towards communication between parents and teachers. These percentages from the survey show that the parent and teacher perceptions of the

current communication methods can be positive and are not posing a negative effect towards student success (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Mechanisms of Communication Survey Response



Discussion

Parent and teacher communication that involves engagement, trust, and respect between both stakeholders has been predictive of positive student outcomes (Cook, 2019). Chapter Two explored the literature related to communication between parents and teachers, including factors in communication and theories pertaining to the study of identifying teacher and parental communication methods that could impact educational outcomes at Bayou Elementary School in northwest Louisiana. The three data collection methods, which included teacher interviews, a parent and teacher focus group, and a quantitative survey, were analyzed and juxtaposed to current research surrounding parent and teacher communication.

Theoretical Literature

The theoretical framework implemented in this applied research study was Epstein's (2018) Six Types of Parental Involvement and Swap's (1993) Four Elements of Partnership. The data from the study further showed support of both research theories. One particular theme that was present in the analysis of the interview and focus group data was establishing and integrating parent opportunities for involvement in their child's classroom and school. The teacher, administrative, and parent participants felt that providing opportunities for parental involvement could promote positive relationships with the teachers and ultimately aid in supporting student outcomes. However, the teachers and parents shared that due to the district's policy on student confidentiality, parents were not allowed to enter the classrooms during instructional time to observe their child. One parent noted that this can become a challenge to see how his child is learning in an educational setting and ask the teacher for strategies that could help improve their child's education and behavior from home. Many students at Bayou Elementary represent various cultural and social backgrounds, which could result in different approaches to cognitive, social, and behavioral needs in the school environment.

Epstein's (2018) six types of parental involvement reflect on the importance of parental engagement, which were integrated from multiple viewpoints throughout the interviews and focus groups. The teacher and administrative participants emphasized the importance of maintaining a good source of communication with each other because some parents may not share the same views on education or have busy work schedules that limit their time to help their child from home. When trying to gain an understanding on effective communication, it is important to investigate the relationship among how schools communicate and the parental viewpoints or perceptions of that school (Dempster & Robbins, 2017). This particular research emphasized the importance of parent and teacher communication when interview and focus

group participants were asked to describe how communication methods are being utilized at Bayou Elementary School.

An additional theory that contributed to the analysis of this research was Swap's (1993) Four Elements of Partnership. Examining this particular theoretical framework, the four elements of partnership established an example of the recommended relationship between teachers, schools, and parents (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017). Further, this model identifies the mutual responsibilities and a continuum of involvement and engagement for parents and schools, which can provide opportunities for how parents can become partners in education (Burke, 2020). Participants from the interview and focus groups discussed their perceptions on how communication between parents and teachers is being implemented and whether they think the factors in communication have made a difference in student success. Most of the teacher and parent focus group participants felt that having daily interactions with each other about their child's academic and behavioral needs helped maintain accountability, promoted a mutual respect for each other, and instilled expectations of their students at school and home. Additionally, data from the quantitative survey showed positive results toward creating effective two-way communication, which is one of the major components of Swap's (1993) Four Elements of Partnership.

Empirical Literature

The majority of the empirical literature in this applied study emphasized that parent and teacher communication is a contribution to a child's education, which can have a direct impact towards their academic achievement (Delaney, 2017). Data that was analyzed in this study further emphasized how parent and teacher communication approaches are evolving based on numerous perspectives. The quantitative survey data reported that while current communication

methods are used frequently (school app and electronic resources), other approaches may need more attention (in-person contact), to increase the overall rating of parent and teacher communication. Other empirical research also informed that the use of digital communication could impact the specific amount of information being conveyed on a daily basis or the varying technological competences of different parents and teachers (Erdreich, 2020). Themes from this study verified the influence that communication approaches can have towards student outcomes. The majority of participants agreed that the new technological communication approaches used at Bayou Elementary have positively influenced their perceptions towards parent and teacher partnerships, which is a direct reflection of previous research on communication methods and student achievement (Head, 2020).

In this research study, it incorporated previous research to emphasize the need for further understanding of parent, teacher, and administrative viewpoints towards communication and the influences they pose on student outcomes. From the data gathered, it is apparent that while the participants may share similar views on the importance of parent and teacher communication, there are differing perceptions about which types of parent and teacher communication methods are most effective towards their child's success. Some of the parents in the study explained that parent and teacher communication should focus on more frequent "personal interactions" to gain further understanding of their child's progress, while other parents felt that "digital messages" and interactions via the school app were sufficient at relaying academic and behavioral information. Prior research (Anthony & Ogg, 2019) and this applied study sought to understand parent and teacher communication and identify factors that influence communication to help implement effective communication methods that could result in positive student outcomes.

Summary

This chapter described the data collected from an applied research study to better understand parent and teacher communication perspectives to determine if any communication factors influence student success. The data from the study was analyzed and categorized into three separate sections including teacher and administrator interviews, parent and teacher focus groups, and a quantitative survey. For the qualitative interviews, the themes that evolved included parental involvement, student needs, and communication methods. The teacher and parent focus groups' themes included parent opportunities, school atmosphere, communication benefits, and setbacks. Finally, themes that were discovered from the survey included parental and teacher commitment and mechanisms of communication. All of the data collected and analyzed was used for the purpose of documenting the importance of parent and teacher communication in schools. Further, the data aided in providing understanding of the numerous perceptions of communication that parents and teachers share to determine if improvements in communication should be implemented. Chapter Five suggests a proposed solution to the problem of potential deficits in communication methods used between parents and teachers at Bayou Elementary School.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

In this research project, the researcher used a multimethod research study to investigate the problem of deficits in communication methods used between parents and teachers at Bayou Elementary School. Research has documented that some communication issues are due to technology advancements and minimizing personal interactions (Berklan & Hughes, 2020). However, further research should focus on the influence of these communication methods at multiple school populations to further understand how they contribute to parent and teacher communication. This study used both qualitative and quantitative methodology to examine the communication methods used between parents and teachers at Bayou Elementary School and determine how to improve communication. Data from this applied study was collected and analyzed, which resulted in emerging themes from the teachers, parents, and administrators. This chapter restates the problem and includes a proposed solution to the central research question. Additionally, this chapter discusses the potential funds needed to fix the problem and an explanation of the positive and negative implications of this study. Finally, Chapter Five concludes with an evaluation plan, limitations, delimitations, and a timeline for the proposed solution.

Restatement of the Problem

This research study examined potential parent and teacher communication deficits at an urban elementary school in northwest Louisiana. In this study, I focused on measuring parent and teacher communication through their perspectives to gain an understanding of the factors that influence student success and to provide the stakeholders with potential solutions. The results indicated that the majority of participants are satisfied with the current communication methods

that are utilized at Bayou Elementary School. However, there were areas of communication where participants expressed that improvements could be made towards influencing student outcomes. The three data collection methods used to gather the data were interviews, a parent and teacher focus group, and a quantitative Likert-scale survey. Ultimately, the multimethod approaches implemented in this research study informed the problem and was helpful in identifying ways that Bayou Elementary School can improve parent and teacher communication.

Proposed Solution to the Central Question

The central question of this study asked: “How do communication methods between elementary teachers and parents impact educational outcomes at Bayou Elementary School?” After a thorough analysis of the collected data in Chapter Four, it is apparent that the majority of teachers and parents are satisfied with the current level of communication; however, there are indications that improvements in communication are still desired. In order to address these potential improvement areas, the following proposed solutions are offered to help foster the parent and teacher partnerships in communication.

In this research study, data suggested that in-person methods could serve as a tool to increase communication at Bayou Elementary School. Some of the teacher and parent focus group and survey participants reported that they would like to see more volunteer opportunities, collaboration, and school-wide events. Therefore, to improve parent and teacher communication at Bayou Elementary, the school administration should consider implementing a Communication Support Program. This program would consist of committee members including parents, teachers, and administrators from Bayou Elementary who represent different backgrounds and have varying experiences in regards to parent and teacher communication. The mission of this program would be to develop collaborative opportunities for parents and teachers to foster

effective partnerships as well as professional trainings for all stakeholders that aide in helping students succeed.

The first goal of this program should be to identify daily availability when teachers can allow parents to communicate with them during a scheduled timeframe. Focus group and survey results suggested that some parents and teachers have differing viewpoints on effective communication methods that could impact student outcomes. Although there is no definitive answer on perfecting parent and teacher communication (Herrera et al., 2020), it would be helpful if the program could determine what parent communication looks like to all parents so that they can meet the needs of students. As a result, Bayou Elementary teachers and administration will be capable of understanding how all parents want to communicate and ultimately improve their partnerships and subsequent student outcomes (Gonzalez-DeHass, 2019).

The second goal of the program should be to request that the school district make necessary changes to allow further parental involvement opportunities at Bayou Elementary School to enhance the partnerships with teachers and students. Several teachers and parents felt that they were comfortable with using electronic methods such as the school app and did not need in-person communication or involvement in the classroom. However, other parents and teachers mentioned they would like more collaborative opportunities to help support each child's needs at school and home. The theme of parental and teacher commitment emerged from the study and can be solved by parents and teachers working with students in the classroom and at home to support academic goals. By allowing parents opportunities to become further involved at their child's school, this will provide more accountability in making the best educational decisions for students as a team (Pawlas, 2013). One possible suggestion could be to develop a

communication log for teachers to submit monthly to the Bayou Elementary School administration showing they have maintained continuous contact with parents. The communication log may include requirements such as positive remarks on students, areas of growth, and time for parents to share their concerns. The Communication Support Program committee could present the communication log to the district along with a proposed guideline including the requirements and how often teachers should be in contact with parents.

The third goal of the program should be to design professional development seminars on effective parent and teacher communication for all stakeholders at Bayou Elementary to attend. Previous research suggests that professional development for teachers and parents could help improve the quality of communication and student success (Roman & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2016). Analysis from the interviews suggested that some teachers believed that further professional development and trainings should be offered at Bayou Elementary regarding parent and teacher communication. One possible solution would be to schedule monthly seminars on parent and teacher communication requiring all teachers and administration to attend, while parents would be highly encouraged to participate. Each session could ask questions and encourage feedback from both parents and teachers to understand both perspectives regarding communication and meeting student outcomes. All professional development trainings would be recorded and watched at a later time for parents and teachers who cannot attend. Another possible solution would be to ask for parents and teachers to work in randomly selected groups in an open discussion style meeting with a specified topic or agenda on communication. By encouraging input from parents and teachers, professional development could help create a stronger relationship by instilling responsibilities and respect (Morgan, 2017).

Resources Needed

The resources needed for this study are time commitment and acquiring research on parent and teacher communication. The majority of the participants agreed that parents, teachers, and administrators all have busy schedules, which further supports the use of school app and electronic communication methods. Since the purpose of the Communication Support Program committee is to increase parent and teacher communication, they should consider committing extra time and dedication to ensuring all communication methods are being addressed to meet parents' needs, as well as students' needs. To do so, the school administration from Bayou Elementary would have to invite parents and teachers to volunteer and serve on the program's committee. To have a diverse representation, the administration would need one teacher and one parent from each grade (K-6) with a maximum of seven teachers, seven parents, and two administrators. Committee members should have term limits established to one year of service that would allow other parents and teachers an opportunity to participate in the future. Bayou Elementary school administration will have to be flexible with scheduling committee meetings and professional development trainings, as there may be changes in school events or time needed for collaboration. Further, the committee members will have to perform research and present information on parent and teacher communication at the professional development trainings. The potential barriers to these solutions could be the lack of time available to hold committee meetings or parents, teachers, the school administration; a lack of ability to conduct research; and the district not having enough interest in improving parent and teacher communication.

Funds Needed

The funds needed to generate the solution will be minimal since financing is not necessary to implement the Communication Support Program. However, if the committee

decides to provide professional development resources such as study guides, books, refreshments, or paid guest speakers, that would require funding for the parents, teachers, and administration. Funding would not be necessary for creating a communication log and presenting the guidelines and requirements to the district. If needed, funding would need to come from a set budget or possibly a school fundraiser. Bayou Elementary School is currently trying to encourage parent and teacher collaboration that promotes student achievement which could be used to gain support for funding the program. The potential barriers to the solution could include a lack of interest from the school administration or minimal funding support from the school such as fundraisers or the PTL; however, offering the committee members a stipend for their extra time and work could help promote the continuous support of the program.

Roles and Responsibilities

In order to help with parent and teacher communication at Bayou Elementary School, it is recommended that the school administration support the development of a communication committee that represents teachers, parents, and administrators within the school setting. The administration's role will be to help initiate the development of the committee through recruiting parents and teachers, oversee the committee to ensure they are executing the mission of the program, determine funding needs, and scheduling committee meetings and professional development trainings for all the stakeholders. The administration will serve as the liaison between Bayou Elementary School and the district. The Communication Support Program committee's role will be to hold monthly meetings on parent and teacher communication initiatives, present professional development seminars open to all parents and teachers representing Bayou Elementary, distribute surveys and feedback forms to parents and teachers to gain further understanding of parent and teacher communication, and to present the

communication log guidelines to the district leadership. At committee meetings, roles such as a secretary, treasurer, or other pertinent jobs will need to be filled. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the entire committee to continue the support and education of parent and teacher communication partnerships that promote student success.

Timeline

The process for the development and implementation of the Communication Support Program could be accomplished within a six-month timeframe, but the program should be a yearly process once the committee is initiated (see Appendix J). Once the school administration has shared the mission of the program and the purpose for a committee, the teachers would need to choose the respective teachers and parents to serve on the committee. After the committee has been assembled, the school administration will hold the initial committee meeting where the roles, mission, and responsibilities will be discussed. Further discussions will take place between the committee meetings to help prepare for upcoming professional development trainings and presenting the communication log guidelines to the district. Once the final details of the presentations are finished, the committee can start having the schedule professional development seminars for all parents and teachers. The administration will schedule a formal meeting with the district's leadership for the committee to present their current professional development efforts and the communication log for possible implementation.

Solution Implications

Parent and teacher communication in schools is an important factor in determining student success and should be evaluated by parents, teachers, and school administrators to gain further knowledge of communication methods within their school environment. The positive implications of the Communication Support Program committee include increased learning

opportunities regarding parent and teacher communication, which could ultimately improve communication efforts and student outcomes in the school community. The solutions from the committee can decrease the amount of miscommunication by training parents and teachers to become a collaborative partnership in every student's life. Further, the committee could increase parental participation and collaborative opportunities that would allow parents and teachers to further understand how every student is learning in the classroom and at home.

One negative implication of the Communication Support Program committee is that more time and commitment will need to be spent on developing the curriculum for professional development trainings. Committee members should expect to spend extra time both at the school and home incorporating and collecting research to support parent and teacher communication trainings. However, once the initial curriculum has been designed this may only change based upon the evolving and changing needs at Bayou Elementary School. An additional negative implication of the committee is that the members who serve may feel their opinions and time are not valued. Therefore, each member should be given equal opportunities to provide their own input and viewpoints concerning parent and teacher communication. Further, some committee members may feel that they have dedicated too much time to the mission of the group and that not enough of their time is being dedicated to their own endeavors. Funding and resources could potentially be a negative implication if the committee chooses to invest in additional curriculum and educational tools that aid in parent and teacher communication. Ultimately, having a Communication Support Program can be beneficial despite any negative implications for parents, teachers, and administrators.

Evaluation Plan

To evaluate the effectiveness of the Communication Support Program, the committee members should distribute a survey to all parents and teachers at Bayou Elementary School bi-annually after the initial implementation of the program begins. This will help evaluate and assess whether communication efforts between parents and teachers have improved and if they have impacted student success. A quantitative Likert-Scale survey, similar to the one used in this study, can be distributed to the parents and teachers to compare responses. Teachers and parents should be consulted about the effectiveness of equally encouraged electronic initiated communication versus in-person communication opportunities including parent observations.

Limitations

Limitations of the study include the fact that the research study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic and the school district did not allow in-person opportunities for participation and involvement in the school or classroom. Additionally, the parent, teacher, and administrative sample sizes from the interview, focus groups, and survey were small. A delimitation from this research study was only using one elementary school in the district; therefore, the data from this research may not be a fair representation of the entire district's elementary school population. Future research should focus on parent and teacher communication efforts in multiple elementary schools within a district to see how larger populations interact and approach partnerships in education. Additionally, researchers should consider future studies including student perspectives on whether they feel that parents and teachers are communicating effectively and contributing to their academic success. Finally, researchers should consider comparing studies like this one and how they handled parent and teacher communication during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Summary

Over the years, parent and teacher communication has become a vital component of a student's success in education. This applied research study analyzed the research question of how communication methods between elementary teachers and parents can impact educational outcomes at Bayou Elementary School in northwest Louisiana. This multimethod study implemented mixed research methods to inform the problem of parent and teacher communication and develop themes to gain further understanding of the relationship that communication between parents and teachers can pose on students at Bayou Elementary School. After analyzing data from the interviews, focus groups, and a survey, there is evidence that supports the need for improvements in parent and teacher communication methods. A solution, the Communication Support Program, is presented as a way to foster and develop improved partnerships in communication, which can result in positive educational outcomes. The proposed solution offers opportunities for parents, teachers, and school administrators to learn together how they can improve with communication. As a result, teachers and parents can become more effective at communicating and show students that educational partnerships can have a positive impact on student success.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

August 14, 2020

Erin Hughes
Leldon Nichols

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY20-21-29 Identifying Teacher and Parental Communication Methods That Could Impact Elementary School Students' Educational Outcomes

Dear Erin Hughes, Leldon Nichols:

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study does not classify as human subjects research. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.


Decision: No Human Subjects Research

Explanation: Your study is not classified as human subjects research because it consists of quality improvement activities, which are not considered "research" according to 45 CFR 46.102(d).

Please note that this decision only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account. Also, because of this determination, you are not required to use the IRB's recruitment and consent documents, but if you do, please replace the word *research* with *project*.

If you have any questions about this determination or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your application's status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,


G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

Appendix B: Division Approval Letter

8/21/20

[Redacted]
Assistant Superintendent,
Curriculum & Instruction
[Redacted] Parish Schools
[Redacted]

Dear Erin Hughes:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled Identifying Teacher and Parental Communication Methods That Could Impact Elementary School Students' Educational Outcomes, I have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study at an elementary school in [Redacted] Parish.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

- You will be allowed to interview the teachers and administration for your qualitative data.
- You will be allowed to hold a focus discussion with the parents and teachers for your qualitative data.
- You will be allowed to survey the parents and school employees for your quantitative data.

Sincerely,

[Redacted Signature]
Assistant Superintendent,
Curriculum & Instruction
[Redacted] Parish Schools


note: Participation will be @ the discretion of the school principal.

Appendix C: School Administration Approval Letter

8/26/20


Assistant Principal





Dear Erin Hughes:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled Identifying Teacher and Parental Communication Methods That Could Impact Elementary School Students' Educational Outcomes, I have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study at  Elementary School.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

- You will be allowed to interview the teachers and administration for your qualitative data.
- You will be allowed to hold a focus discussion with the parents and teachers for your qualitative data.
- You will be allowed to survey the parents and school employees for your quantitative data.

Sincerely,



Assistant Principal
 Elementary School

Appendix D: Administrator Consent Form

Administrator Consent Form

Title of the Project: Identifying Teacher and Parental Communication Methods That Could Impact Elementary School Students' Educational Outcomes

Principal Investigator: Erin Hughes, Doctoral Student, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be a school principal or assistant principal employed at [REDACTED] Elementary School. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to identify teacher and parental communication methods that could impact student achievement at [REDACTED] Elementary School, inform the administration whether or not issues are found, and offer possible recommendations.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following:

1. Participate in a virtual interview. You will be asked about communicating with parents at [REDACTED] Elementary School. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes and questions will be sent via e-mail to answer.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. Benefits to society include offering recommendations to improve communication between parents and teachers in order to promote student achievement.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- I will send the interview questions online via e-mail where others will not be able to see the conversations. Participants' personal information will remain anonymous.
- Interviews will be transcribed to collect the data. Information will be stored on a password locked computer and may be used in future presentations. The data will be stored for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to the data.

Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?

The researcher has a child who attends [REDACTED] Elementary School, but does not work at [REDACTED] Elementary School or for [REDACTED] Parish Schools. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Erin Hughes. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Leldon Nichols, at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Appendix E: Parent Consent Form

Parent Consent Form

Title of the Project: Identifying Teacher and Parental Communication Methods That Could Impact Elementary School Students' Educational Outcomes

Principal Investigator: Erin Hughes, Doctoral Student, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be 18 years old and a parent or legal guardian of a student who attends ██████ Elementary School. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to identify teacher and parental communication methods that could impact student achievement at ██████ Elementary School, inform the administration whether or not issues are found, and offer possible recommendations.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will randomly assign participants and ask you to do one the following things:

2. Participate in an online focus discussion. You will be asked with other parents about communicating with teachers. The focus discussion will take approximately 45 minutes and online conversations will be electronically recorded for future transcription.
3. Complete an online, 15-minute survey, using google forms, concerning communication with teachers at ██████ Elementary School. If you choose to participate, the survey will be e-mailed to you. The data will be electronically recorded in google docs.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. Benefits to society include offering recommendations to improve communication between parents and teachers in order to promote student achievement.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participants will be assigned a pseudonym.
- Focus group data will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer and may be used in future presentations. The data will be stored for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to the data.
- Survey data will be stored securely on Google docs and a password protected computer.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. Alias names will be given to participants in order to keep their identities anonymous. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?

The researcher has a child who attends [REDACTED] Elementary School, but does not work at [REDACTED] Elementary School or for [REDACTED] Parish Schools. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Erin Hughes. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Leldon Nichols, at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Appendix F: Teacher Consent Form

Teacher Consent Form

Title of the Project: Identifying Teacher and Parental Communication Methods That Could Impact Elementary School Students' Educational Outcomes

Principal Investigator: Erin Hughes, Doctoral Student, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be a teacher who is employed at [REDACTED] Elementary School. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to identify teacher and parental communication methods that could impact student achievement at [REDACTED] Elementary School, inform the administration whether or not issues are found, and offer possible recommendations.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will randomly assign participants and ask you to do one of the following things:

4. Participate in a virtual interview. You will be asked about communicating with parents at [REDACTED] Elementary School. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes and questions will be sent via e-mail to answer.
5. Participate in an online focus discussion. You will be asked with other teachers about communicating with parents. The focus discussion will take approximately 45 minutes and online conversations will be electronically recorded for future transcription.
6. Complete an online, 15-minute survey, using google forms, concerning communication with parents at [REDACTED] Elementary School. If you choose to participate, the survey will be e-mailed to you. The data will be electronically recorded in google docs.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. Benefits to society include offering recommendations to improve communication between parents and teachers in order to promote student achievement.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- I will send the interview questions online via e-mail where others will not be able to see the conversations. Participants for the focus group will be assigned a pseudonym.
- Interview and focus group data will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer and may be used in future presentations. The data will be stored for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to the data.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. Alias names will be given to participants in order to keep their identities anonymous. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.
- Survey data will be stored securely on Google docs and a password protected computer. Participants' identities will remain anonymous.

Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?

The researcher has a child who attends [REDACTED] Elementary School, but does not work at [REDACTED] Elementary School or for [REDACTED] Parish Schools. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be

included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Erin Hughes. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Leldon Nichols, at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Appendix G: Interview Script/Questions

Researcher: Hello, my name is Erin Hughes. My role as the researcher is to ask you some questions during our interview. Before we begin, I would like to ensure you that anything discussed during this interview is strictly for the data in this research study. My job is not to ask you questions pertaining to any specific student nor will I ask you to share anyone's personal information. Your answers will not be attributed to you and will be kept confidential. Although my son is in elementary school, as a researcher I am not allowed to disclose any personal bias in the data of this study. My thoughts and opinions will not be included in your answers. Do you have any questions? If not, then we can begin with the interview.

Researcher: The following interview questions will guide this study.

Semi-Structured Interview Open-Ended Questions (Teachers and Principal)

1. What communication methods could be used to provide better communication among elementary teachers and parents?
2. Which type of communication tools do you currently use that provide opportunities for elementary teacher and parent collaboration?
3. Which types of communication are the most effective?
4. How does the school or district handle conflicts with parents and students? Is there a set protocol or guideline that must be followed?
5. What type of professional development or resources are offered for teachers to utilize on communicating with parents?
6. How often are parents asked to attend parent-teacher conferences to discuss student progress?
7. Provide examples of how you would ask parents to be involved at school and home?

8. What setbacks have you encountered when asking parents to communicate, become more involved, or make a donation for classroom supplies?
9. How do you feel when parents contact you about their child's academic achievement or behavior? Can you provide any examples?
10. How does communication among elementary teachers and parents vary based upon each student's needs?

Appendix H: Focus Group Questions

1. What opportunities at Bayou Elementary School allow parents to collaborate with teachers?
2. As a parent or teacher, how often do you try to communicate with each other?
3. When are parents allowed to come into the classroom to visit or observe their child?
4. When are parents not permitted to visit their child in the classroom?
5. As a parent or teacher, how important is communication to you? Why?
6. How does the school ensure that student information is kept confidential between parents and teachers while communicating with each other?
7. Which types of activities do you think Bayou Elementary should allow parents to participate with students at school?
8. Why do you think parents and teachers sometimes struggle with communication?
9. Which type of communication is easiest and most convenient for you?
10. If you could think of one way to help improve communication between parents and teachers, what would that be?

Appendix I: Quantitative Communication Survey

Instructions: On a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being strongly disagree, 3 being neutral, and 5 being strongly agree, please rate the following questions.

| | | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|----|--|------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| | Question: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1. | The amount of communication between parents and teachers from ██████ Elementary School is satisfactory. | | | | | |
| 2. | The use of electronic or social media methods of communication at ██████ Elementary School improve overall communication between parents and teachers. | | | | | |
| 3. | The current communication methods at ██████ Elementary School are effective at relaying all necessary information between parents, the teachers, and the school. | | | | | |
| 4. | Paper and written methods of communication are sufficient towards keeping parents informed. | | | | | |
| 5. | Face-to-face communication would improve parental understanding on classroom activities and student progress. | | | | | |
| 6. | Improvements need to be made towards communication between parents and teachers at ██████ Elementary School. | | | | | |
| 7. | In-person observation or visiting the classroom during instructional time would be beneficial for parents to monitor their child's progress. | | | | | |
| 8. | Sufficient examples of completed or graded work are sent home to allow parents to see their child's progress. | | | | | |
| 9. | Students are given the appropriate amount of homework to reinforce what was taught at school. | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|-----|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 10. | Parents are given adequate notifications regarding their child's behavior at school. | | | | | |
|-----|--|--|--|--|--|--|

Appendix J: Timeline of Communication Support Program

- August 2020—School administration shares the mission and purpose of the program at a faculty and back-to-school meeting.
- August 2020—The teachers choose the members to serve on the committee and the administration schedules the first committee meeting.
- September 2020—The initial committee meeting takes place and the roles, mission, and responsibilities are discussed.
- October 2020—The second meeting takes place where the committee begins sending out surveys to parents and teachers about current communication.
- October 2020—The committee also begins organizing the guidelines and requirements for the communication log.
- November 2020—A third meeting is held to share the results of the communication surveys to determine future topics for professional training seminars.
- November 2020—The committee takes the survey data and also compiles the results to further support the need for increased collaborative opportunities.
- December 2020—Committee members begin offering monthly professional development trainings on communication to all parents and teachers.
- January 2021—The committee presents the findings of the survey and the communication log guidelines to the district.
- April 2021—Surveys are distributed again to compare the results from the last communication survey.