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# How Can Increased Parental Involvement Facilitate Greater Student Engagement and Academic Success Within One RGV Middle School

Jaime H. Serna  
*The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley*

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HOW CAN INCREASED PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT FACILITATE GREATER  
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS WITHIN  
ONE RGV MIDDLE SCHOOL

A Dissertation

by

JAIME H. SERNA

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Major Subject: Curriculum and Instruction

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

May 2023



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JAIME H. SERNA

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dr. Jacob Neumann  
Chair of Committee

Dr. Zhidong Zhang  
Committee Member

Dr. Raul Fregoso Bailon  
Committee Member

May 2023



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## ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study is to explore how increased parental involvement can be encouraged in the Rio Grande Valley, K-12 school district in order to facilitate greater student engagement and academic success. An action research project will be done to explore middle school teacher perspectives on parental involvement and the effect it has on student academics. Research will take place in Sunview Middle School where interviews and observations will be conducted with teachers, parental involvement assistants and administrators. Data will be used to assist in improving and promoting the parental involvement program, which will support all stakeholders to better assist the students.

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





## DEDICATION

Para mis padres, Jesus y Diana Serna, que con esfuerzo me dieron la mejor educacion, consejos y guianza en la vida, los amo. Para mi hermana, Mayra Serna, que siempre estuviste para mi en todo aspecto. Y para mi hermosa esposa, Renee Serna y mis hijos, Jaime Serna Jr, Jovany Serna y Jenee Serna. En la vida todo se puede, el unico limite eres tu mismo. Los amo y con mucho esfuerzo y cariño esto es para ustedes.



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

My interest in parental involvement began when I worked as an assistant principal in charge of the Parental Involvement Program for my middle school, what I'll call "Sunview Middle School." That role was an eye opener. Quality parental involvement is crucial to guiding our students correctly and helping them improve academically. Parental involvement doesn't only focus on the academic aspect of our students, but also helps with attendance, overall support, and student achievement for students and families. Parental involvement boosts a child's perceived level of competence and autonomy, offers a sense of security and connectedness, and helps to internalize the value of an education and performance (Young et al., 2013). Yet, when I started that position, the parental involvement program at the school was poorly structured and was not followed with fidelity. Further, Sunview had ineffective goals and a program that did not match the current student demographics. The lack of an effective parental involvement program was evident, and it was poorly managed due to the many activities and programs at a secondary level.

Unfortunately, these problems at Sunview are not new, nor are they isolated to just this one campus within the school district. I was a student in this school district 20 years ago, and problems with parental involvement existed even back then. I think the experience of my own family is probably representative of many families back then as well as today. My parents were not actively involved in the schooling of me or my sister. They certainly loved us, wanted the best for us, and tried to help us grow up to be happy and successful.

But they both worked long hours to be able to provide shelter, food, and clothing for us. Both of my parents spoke Spanish, and they understood very little English. They had little knowledge about educational technology, and they had little understanding of how to best guide us through our education.

Presently, I work as the head principal for Sunview, a campus that has much potential to serve as a model school for academics, fine arts, and athletics, and my goal is to improve the parental involvement program in place; as the program improves, I hope to engage and have more stakeholders aiming for the success of the campus; therefore, the goal of this research will be to improve the parental involvement communication among all parents and distribute communication in their native language to provide a fair and equitable opportunity to all parents at Sunview Middle School. It will also strive to provide fairness and support and provide a voice to enhance the children's academic education and parental involvement program.

Parents, guardians, and students go through life with many obstacles that impede academic success. We need to better enhance our awareness as a district or campus of the surrounding barriers that affect student and stakeholder participation; because parents provide moral and academic support when it's most needed, it is critical that parents are involved in their children's educational journey. For this reason, parental involvement strategies need to be implemented to address academic success. For example, research indicates that more subtle types of parental involvement may have a better influence on student achievement than other involvement expressions such as checking homework and maintaining household rules (Jeynes, 2005, 2011).

The purpose of the parental involvement program is to support student academic achievement as well as student growth in all areas, which means that time needs to be dedicated

to these areas for many reasons. First, parents play an important part in their children's learning (Bodovski, 2010). Second, when provided, parental involvement positively affects student academic achievement (Antonopoulou et al., 2011). Third, a lack of communication is a major barrier between parents and teachers, which can hinder student academic growth (Griffin & Galassi, 2010). Focusing on data that will assist and support academic success would be ideal to address and improve overall achievement of the program and the integration of technology into the parental involvement program.

To obtain data for this study, the researcher conducted an action research project to investigate how to improve parental involvement at Sunview. Action research is the process of systematic reflection by individuals on their own professional practice (Adelman, 1993). Action research is an inquiry that is carried out in order to understand, evaluate, and change educational practice (Dick, 2002) The action research cycle can be characterized by action leading to critical reflection and then, perhaps, to further action (Dick, 2002)

This study explored methods of improving parental engagement at Sunview. The results were hoped to improve parent and teacher communication, which may result in improving academic success for all students in the K-12 schools. The overall goal for the improvement of parent and teacher communication was to be able to build a bridge between both entities and communicate between parents, students, and teacher expectations. All entities needed to be receptive and accountable in efforts to help students in academic achievement by monitoring student work, completion of assignments, attendance, and redirecting student behavior. Intimate parent-teacher communication is effective for student learning and achievement. Students who are successful in high school are likely to be successful in college and adult life after college (Balfanz, 2009).

This study explored possible solutions for problems that affect the parental involvement program. The use of technology helped improve the overall awareness of stakeholders of campus initiatives, student academic success, and helped parents voice areas of needs or concerns. Prior experience has proven that intimate parent-teacher communication is effective for student learning and achievement. Overall, the need to address and improve parental involvement is critical and important to better assist students at this campus. In addition, being able to accommodate and modify the demographics as the school year progressed was beneficial as some campus goals and plans may have changed as results were provided.

### **The Story of Parental Involvement at Sunview Middle School**

When I started working at Sunview, the parental involvement program was a mess. The prior campus administration had no system in place. They never advised parents of campus initiatives, goals, or the direction the campus was taking with their children. Decisions were always made without any stakeholder input as it was only to complete the process in order to be in compliance with central office directives. Many goals that were set did not change since year one of the campus being opened with the same date still on the list.

Reflecting on the prior years before my leadership, one of the main problems the campus always encountered was the lack of communication with parents. Many parents complained that they missed their children's activities because no one made them aware. They expressed that they were not able to take time off to cherish accomplishments, come to open houses, or meet the teacher nights as these were not posted on campus social media, and no type of communication was sent out to parents. Comments were made that when their children were in elementary school, there was always communication, and it seemed like parents were not a priority in secondary schools.

Due to COVID19, the district made available to every student a laptop and a WiFi hotspot if requested. A valid comment made by many parents and educators was that if there was access to so many technological resources, why wasn't the campus utilizing them? After that, administration and a selected amount of personnel were trained on using the *Parentlink* application and given access to campus social media; however, the lack of monitoring still lead to not making progress in letting stakeholders know about student functions, activities or information provided by the campus and district.

As time passed, parents requested to be part of a campus "round table" in order to make recommendations for campus initiatives, data, community events, or making improvements on programs that were not followed up with fidelity like the parental involvement program. As programs were briefly reviewed, one could see that only dates were changed on reports in order to be in compliance, and no information was added or deleted to reflect new student demographics or needs.

As an educator, one of the main things that hinder parental communication is that some administrators do not allow school parents to express their concerns or beliefs. Educators sometimes forget that they are here to serve and educate the children of today who will be our leaders of tomorrow. At Sunview Middle School, parents expressed feeling overwhelmed by the lack of communication coming from the campus as many times, parents don't find out about programs until after they have been posted in social media by someone, or their children talk about them. At the end of the day, it's a two-way street where school personnel and parents meet each other halfway and put in the effort to have their children succeed. Research by Baumrind and others indicated that those parental styles with a combination of a strong expression of love



and support and a beneficial degree of discipline and structure tend to provide the healthiest environment in which children can grow (Jeynes, 2005, 2011).

Parental involvement in some aspect needs to be intentional and parent friendly. Sunview Middle School is a prime example of when a proactive administrator comes in with the right attitude to make change, change will happen in a positive way. What worked years ago will not work for today's society since education itself evolves every day. Educators must let parents participate in campus decisions such as new initiatives to keep students engaged and incentivize student attendance, good behavior, and academic success. The parents are the key feedback as students go home and communicate with them about their day. Giving parents the opportunity to assist educators side-by-side may alleviate many questions as they sometimes don't have immediate parent feedback. With the COVID-19 pandemic, it was learned that one can use technology to gather information and assess data to better serve the community. It is imperative that we lend an ear to the parents as many times, they may have concerns and/or need clarification about certain topics. As a school administrator, I feel that parent concerns or needs should be addressed and taken care of with the best possible solution and in a timely manner.

### **The Research Process**

A quick synopsis of this research was given to better understand the reading throughout different chapters. Campus personnel such Assistant Principal, Mr. Antonio Salinas, Parental Involvement Assistant, Mrs. Angelica Chavez, Mrs. Veronica Rodriguez, teacher, Mrs. Maria Delgado, teacher, and Mrs. Carmen Martinez, also a teacher, were interviewed to provide information that helped address campus needs for a successful and structured program.

It was important that stakeholders felt the mutual commitment amongst campus personnel and their families. Many parents need guidance on how to assist their children.

Various studies indicated that the overall trend was that in those programs with a positive impact, the parents felt loved and valued (Mapp et al., 2008). School personnel should be intentional and communicate with parents on student needs and specific areas of support. Campus and district personnel should be able to look at any plans that are in place and modify them to school climate and culture. As a community and in the best interest of the students, a trust relationship should be built to feel the support from the program and address the issues that might arise.

### **Research Questions**

The following four research questions guided this study:

Q1. What are obstacles that impede parental involvement in student academic life?

Q2. What social factors influence parental involvement in student school life?

Q3. How can all stakeholders collaborate to enhance parental involvement and promote student academic success?

Q4. How has Sunview Middle School failed to communicate with stakeholders?

As the interviews began with the targeted campus personnel, it was evident that they wanted to give their feedback to improve Sunview Middle School. The questions were designed on a personal note and assessed the classroom environment, parental involvement program, and student success. The interviews offered beneficial information about parental involvement through examining the roles and perceptions of stakeholders as they related to student success, identified strategies for enhancing parent and school outcomes, and offered feedback on editing and revising current plans that were in place at Sunview Middle School. The research questions were targeted to best understand the missing component between campus and stakeholders.

Using the guiding questions plus the interview questions provided a voice to many concerns that personnel were not able to communicate to administration due to personal reasons. Those types

of questions dealt with resources, leadership, parents, families, and analyzing educator self-reflection.

The participant answers provided firsthand information and honesty. It was critical for individual interviews to be conducted as some staff members did not want to leave paper trails in fear of retaliation. As the explanation of the reasoning behind their concerns, and as they gained trust with confidentiality, staff members opened up with analytical data. Understanding that the data gathered would be confidential, a pseudonym was given to the interviewees to provide complete confidentiality and instill a sense of trust with the researcher. In addition, confidentiality of the school district and personnel involved in this study was maintained throughout the interview process.

### **Delimitations**

While researching this topic, it was important to not extend the research into a larger region, as it may affect the benefits of this research. An additional barrier came from past experiences; as a former migrant student, my family and I suffered because of the lack of communication from campus personnel. For this reason, I chose to research this problem and provide ways that communication could be improved to serve every stakeholder. Being a major advocate for parental involvement, I looked for ways to assist hard-working parents with clear communication with campus or district personnel and searched for more intentional initiatives and methods to keep the ongoing monitoring of those implemented. Also, limited research has been conducted, indicating that although technology offers a means of promoting parent/teacher communication, parents are underutilizing technology in the area of communicating with teachers (Center for the Study of Education Policy, 2004; Herrold & O'Donnell, 2008; Rogers & Wright, 2008). This being said, research may also be limited due to the relationship between

guardian knowledge of technology usage and how to communicate with teachers and or campus personnel.

### **Limitations**

One of the limitations that was discovered through this study was that although the researcher worked on the campus as an administrator and built trust amongst staff, a participant may not be willing to participate in fear that information provided may be used against him/her. Another limitation was that participants were not aware of steps or were not familiar with the parental involvement on their campus. While conducting this research, it was important to keep calm in order for the participants to feel comfortable and possess a sense of belonging.

In addition, when conducting this research, the researcher needed to be intentional on obtaining information on student population and demographics as it provided answers as to how technology could improve the communication of the parental involvement program and the benefits to the student academic achievement. It was important to not try to question or send surveys to parents in the district because it would have been too much data to sort through and would not have been a true representation of Sunview Middle School, and it would not have been reliable information and potentially could have harmed the results. There were potential obstacles that could have really harmed the research; for example, the lack of parents who answered with honesty. Looking into this research and all the potential obstacles, it was imperative that the information was disseminated clearly and precisely.

### **Definition of Terms**

This section lists definitions and explanations of the terms that facilitated and improved the understanding of this study. In most terms, a standard definition was provided to help better understand what may apply to the current study.

*Academic achievement:* Academic achievement broadly refers to the communicative (oral, reading, writing), mathematical, science, social science, and thinking skills and competencies that enable a student to succeed in school and society.

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

*Demographics:* Statistical data (characteristics) of human population.

*Digital native:* A person who is born or brought up with technology and familiar with the functions.

*Education:* International standards of education and work (Patrikakou, 2016) prepare the youth of a nation to compete in a global economy, parents must invest and encourage not only the pursuit of academic excellence but also the development of a wholesome personality.

*Hinder:* Create difficulties for (someone or something), resulting in delay or obstruction.

*Mobile device literate:* Familiar with the basic functions on mobile devices.

*Parents:* For the purpose of this study, parents included family members, guardians, grandparents, uncles, aunts involved in the student's educational success.

*Parental involvement:* Behaviors shown by the parents, both in home and school settings, meant to support the development of their children's social/emotional skills and facilitate their educational success (El Nokali et al., 2010).

*Secondary teachers:* Teachers of students in grades sixth through twelfth.

*Social control:* When families and schools work together to build a consensus about appropriate behavior that can be effectively communicated to children at both home and school (Lindholm-Leary & Borsato, 2006).

*Social factors:* Factors (e.g., attitudes) that affect thought or behavior in social contexts or that affect self-concept.

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

*Stakeholders:* A person of interest.

*Twenty-first-century learner:* A learner with access to technology. Can read and write printed text but can consume and produce a variety of texts across traditional and new technologies. Needs to be proficient in 21<sup>st</sup> century technologies (Serafini, 2012).

## **Conclusion**

Through this study, I hope to help Sunview Middle School improve and facilitate communication between parents and educators. Parents can profit from viable correspondence with the school by having expanded information on strategies, policies, and procedures inside the school, permitting the parents to give more assistance in the educational experience (Epstein, 2013; Herrell, 2011). Student academic achievement should be the main priority with support from stakeholders. The research study findings helped further understand the parental involvement and engagement that was needed to be addressed and better the program. With everyone working together and with the proper guidance, educators can focus on a more direct intentional program. Focusing on campus data can address and support academic success to

improve overall student performance and the parental involvement program. Research validated that when parents and personnel make a personal connection, student achievement, support, and success is increased.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Over several decades, parental involvement has been researched constantly due to the lack of parental involvement still happening in our schools. For many years, educators, parents, and social scientists have conceptualized engaged parents as those who frequently attend school functions, help their children with their homework, and maintain household rules that dictate when their young engage in schoolwork and leisure (Domina, 2005). The participation of parental involvement in the K-12 grade levels is a critical element. Understanding the obstacles impeding this program, finding new initiatives, revising initiatives, assisting parents, and implementing new and more subtle types of parental involvement strategies would be the end goal. This study can encourage the revision of current plans to modify as needed to have a more subtle initiative to address campus and/or district needs. Unfortunately, too many parents remain disconnected from schools and schools have not successfully developed conducive environments and successful, enrichment-filled, sustainable parental resources to enable parents to become actively involved in school functions to help enhance academic achievement in their children (Epstein, 2018; Griffin & Galassi, 2010; Vellymalay, 2012).

Parental involvement in children's education is favorably associated with academic success (Epstein, 2018; Park & Holloway, 2017). Parental involvement, in general, has many smaller pieces in order for the whole program to work successfully; it is like a big puzzle where communication with parents, building relationships and academic success are part of the bigger picture.



Studies showed that schools communicate successfully with parents and guardians when they come from similar cultural backgrounds. With this being said, it is imperative that these personal connections are critical to program success. When parents, guardians, or teachers share similar beliefs, schools can promote parental involvement with ease. For many years, educators, parents, and social scientists have conceptualized engaged parents as those who frequently attend school functions, help their children with their homework, and maintain household rules that dictate when their young engage in schoolwork and leisure (Domina, 2005; Epstein, 2001). It would take a lot from both sides to arouse the involvement, but the effort would pay off. There will be more participation and better communication between parents and school members. Both parents and school members need to make a conscious and intentional effort to facilitate the development of academic and social/emotional skills in children (Roy, & Giraldo-García, 2018).

### **Review of the Relevant Literature into Parental Involvement**

Parental involvement in a child's education is linked to academic success (Epstein, 2018; Park & Holloway, 2017). When schools form alliances and collaborative partnerships with parents to support children's education, academic success among those children prevails (Epstein, 2018). This chapter will investigate the history of parents and their understanding of parental involvement, social factors and barriers that affect the parental involvement, and will investigate new strategies that may have a great impact on the parental involvement program and increase collaboration and student academic success.

Throughout this chapter, Epstein's (2018) six essential components of the school-family-community partnerships that enhance parental involvement (i.e., parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community) is

discussed. Best practices are given as useful resources and guidance in the efforts to improve the parental involvement program.

### **Effective Parent- Teacher Relationship**

Teachers who provide a loving, learning environment also have a high impactful learning environment for students. If educators communicate clearly, sensitively, frequently, and show respect to students and parents, then that helps to improve expectations of parental involvement. A school can run a parental engagement program with great efficiency, but parents can easily discern whether their participation is welcome and whether their input is warmly received (Jeynes, 2005). The key to successful parental involvement is to always welcome parents warmly, in other words, provide the best customer service for parents and stakeholders. Parents involved in effective school communication builds the strength for student success and support with other issues. When parents, guardians, or teachers share similar beliefs, schools can promote parental involvement with ease. Practicing a genuine, consistent relationship in the process is key to an effective program. Parent self-image improves when more parent-teacher collaborations are practiced (Epstein, 2018). An effective parental involvement program can make parents or student guardians feel acknowledged and have a sense of belonging, especially when they trust school personnel with their most important treasure: their children.

It is important that educators understand the importance and value of an effective parental involvement program and their relationship with stakeholders. Even though administrators and school personnel feel it could be difficult to stimulate parental involvement, it is not impossible. Developing and maintaining effective relationships with parents can be a lengthy process that takes time, experience, motivation, sincerity, open communication, persistence, and diligence, which results in more participation and better communication between parents and school

members. Both parents and the school community need to make a conscious and intentional effort to facilitate the development of academic and social/emotional skills in children (Roy & Giraldo-García, 2018). Jeynes (2018) identified a collaborative relationship whereby parents and teachers shared frequent rights and responsibilities and contributed equally to the process. Jeynes (2018) also proposed that it is important to have a flourishing, collaborative partnership that includes mutual respect for skills, shared goals, and shared decision-making. Furthermore, students become more aware and appreciative when they observe their parents working well with teachers, sharing common goals and objectives and striving together for the success of the child (Jeynes, 2018).

The promotion of social/emotional skills to enhance students' academic performance finds an ally in the level and style of parental involvement if it is considered that "effective, lasting academic learning and socio-emotional learning are built on caring relationships" (Elias, 2006, p. 7) Several researchers have highlighted the importance of a strong home, learning environment working in conjunction with effective schools (Sylva et al., 2008) Parental involvement in some aspect needs to be intentional and parent-friendly, letting parents participate in campus decisions.

It is imperative that parents are heard. In many cases, parents have concerns and or need clarification about certain topics, and school administrators should address and take care of parental concerns with the best possible solutions. An effective connection between both "communities" would increase parental involvement in the promotion of children's social, emotional, and academic growth (Hiatt-Michael, 2001). Nevertheless, if parents or guardians are there to voice a concern, complain, ask a question, or state anything regarding the education of their children, school personnel should be able to answer them as soon as possible and build

those relationships, and most importantly, build trust with them. Many parents feel overwhelmed with the lack of communication coming from the school campus. At the end of the day, it's a two-way street, where school personnel and parents meet each other halfway and put in the effort to have their children succeed. Research by Baumrind and others indicates that those parental styles with a combination of a strong expression of love and support and a beneficial degree of discipline and structure tend to provide the healthiest environment in which children can grow (Jeynes, 2005, 2011).

### **Obstacles to Parental Involvement**

There are numerous obstacles that impede parent involvement and their efforts and/or willingness to participate in their children's education. Although there is formidable data that demonstrates how schools and parents should work together, barriers that hinder parents from choosing to become involved in the educational feats of their children remain challenging (Graham-Clay, 2005). It is not the expectations set for a child that will make them thrive in education, but the agreement where parents and educators come together to understand sacrifices from both sides that will help them both succeed. Many parents fail in parental involvement due to financial hardship, where they have to choose to either work more hours to provide for their family or be involved with the education system. Due to their financial problems, parents forget about the importance of being involved in their children's education, not by choice, but out of necessity. Student demographics and economic disadvantage percentages will determine the number of parents who will not be able to attend meetings due to their jobs. However, parents with multiple child-care or extended family responsibilities may be less involved in school-based activities (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). That is, parents under financial or familial stressors may have more of a limited time to be involved at school.

Cultural norms also play an important factor in parental involvement. Parental attitudes are critical to involvement in schools, so children can succeed academically (Keane, 2016) Unfortunately, perceived barriers to parental involvement in school programs hinder forming partnerships between home and school (Griffin & Galassi, 2010). Some regions where students are located may have more weight than other locations. Latinos, generally, have higher levels of family stress (e.g., overall high rates of poverty and mental health problems) (Gonzales et al., 2011). Many students are first-generation children who choose to continue their education, and their parents lack background knowledge in this area. While overall, it may appear that parents of black and Hispanic youth are less involved than white parents (Yan & Lin, 2005) some studies show – after controlling for other background variables – that black and Hispanic parents may often be more involved than White parents in the education of their children (Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). Due to the cultural norm of working extra hours to support family and necessities, parents have little or no time to get involved in their children’s academic needs or get involved on campus. Even though Latino parents tend to report high academic expectations (Goldenberg et al., 2001) stress could attenuate their involvement. Furthermore, in reality, there are some rare cases when parents or guardians just don’t care to get involved at all with their children’s educational journey. The belief that children benefit from their parents’ involvement in school-related activities is supported by research, particularly studies of the impact of parental involvement on students’ academic outcomes, behavior, motivation, engagement, and self-efficacy (Domina, 2005; Fan & Williams, 2010; Jeynes, 2005).

## **Strategies to Engage Parents with Schools**

On the other hand, many social factors influence parental involvement within the school system. Jeynes (2018) identified a collaborative relationship whereby parents and teachers shared frequent rights and responsibilities and contributed equally to the process. Jeynes (2018) also proposed that it is important to have a flourishing, collaborative partnership that includes mutual respect for skills, shared goals, and shared decision-making. Furthermore, students become more aware and appreciative when they observe their parents working well with teachers, sharing common goals and objectives in striving together for the success of the child (Kim & Bryan, 2017). Parents may directly be involved in their child's education, so they can express their concern to push for more after school educational and extracurricular activities. Studies have shown the positive impact of parental involvement on a number of proximal and distal student outcomes, including reading and mathematics achievement (Jeynes, 2005; Epstein, 2013), student behavior in school (Domina, 2005), school attendance, preparation for class, course completion, student motivation, academic self-efficacy, and engagement (Fan & Williams, 2010), and middle school dropout behavior (Sadiku, 2019). Crosnoe (2009) believed that scheduling home visits, creating supportive programming to promote learning at home, beginning cultural sensitivity training, and engaging in activities that increase parenting knowledge would promote involvement among parents.

### **Increasing Parental Involvement Using Technology**

Technology has been in demand due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Researchers have suggested there may not be a universal means of promoting parental involvement, but rather the promotion of parental involvement may need to be tailored to parents based on their particular situations and geographic locations (Patrikakou, 2016).). However, results of Patrikakou's (2016)

study supported the concept that technology can be used to improve parental involvement, especially in low-income populations. District approved computer applications became an effective way to communicate any school information with parents at any time of the day. Parents and guardians were forced to improve their technological skills due to this nature, whether they were ready for this change or not. School district platforms of online communication for virtual meetings currently involve Zoom and Google virtual meeting rooms. Some stakeholders were discouraged as some had difficulties understanding the technology, while others enjoyed the benefits as they were able to communicate more easily with teachers. As an example, teachers used smartphones to collaborate with other teachers, paraprofessionals, related service providers, and parents, when a face-to-face discussion was not possible (Cosier et al., 2015). School districts researched implementing several resources and applications to assist with communication. Technology can always help improve when it is used efficiently and monitored correctly. When barriers exist, and parents need to reach out to the schools for support, the use of technology for the sole purpose of communication can be used as a foundation to build the partnership between parents and teachers (Patrikakou, 2016).

Understanding how mobile devices can enhance parent/teacher communication is important because parents play an important part in their children's learning. If parents are not able to afford a smart phone that has the required applications to be able to communicate with teachers and campus personnel, it creates an obstacle in the engagement between parents and educators. Applications used by districts require them to have a smart phone that has enough storage to download an application that requires connectivity to the internet and provide updates as needed to enhance the application. Due to low socioeconomic status, many may not be able to purchase the required devices to form that bridge of communication. The use of technology can

be a huge benefit with proper administration and guidance of the applications used to collaborate with stakeholders. Although technology can be a means of promoting parent/teacher communication, parents do not always take advantage of this opportunity (Center for the Study of Educational Policy, 2004; Herrold & O'Donnell, 2008; Rogers & Wright, 2008). Parental involvement in a child's learning through communication with the faculty and staff can have a positive impact on student outcomes (Crosnoe, 2009). In general, prior studies have indicated that (a) technology offers a means for promoting parent/teacher communication and (b) parents are underutilizing technology as a means of communicating with teachers (Center for the Study of Educational Policy, 2004; Herrold & O'Donnell, 2008; Rogers & Wright, 2008).

District-approved application programs such as parent links can build an enormous bridge of support with stakeholders because these applications provide communication between parents and schools. The parent link can provide parents information with whatever the school need might be. Besides, school districts can continue sending weekly messages as a grade level, school, or as an individual class, so stakeholders are kept involved with campus information. Weekly messages can inform families about attendance percentage rates, upcoming grade-level events, student grade reports, or motivational quotes. In short, this will help increase some support on events and will also help improve weaknesses a campus may have. Teachers can also send weekly messages that state positive classroom notes, class assignments, or projects. The idea is to use these programs to their fullest and have parents fully engaged and aware of what is happening in their child's educational life. School administrators should communicate with parents throughout the academic year. School personnel should not only be making calls about poor student performance or missing homework assignments, but they also be reporting positive feedback, which in turn, will motivate parents to be more involved and set higher expectations



for their children. School leaders need to instruct parents and educators to have balanced high expectations, i.e., an expectation that each person in the household is to give it his/her very best effort in academic endeavors and often in life (Ginsburg et al., 2015, Jeynes 2018). Many parents also want to feel acknowledged and know that school personnel are aware of their efforts to support their children.

### **Collaborating with Community**

Epstein (2018) maintained that parents and schools of middle school children receive positive outcomes as a result of collaborative, consistent partnerships with teachers. Furthermore, the academic community needs to examine the possibility of questioning current parental involvement theories as insufficient to explain some of the emerging results. An abundance of questions/concerns with parental involvement are arising and need to be addressed. New data shows parents are grateful for new techniques they can implement at home that improve home/school involvement. Stakeholders should always be informed or have a voice in anything that affects their children or the community. Partnerships between schools, families and communities can create safe school environments, strengthen parenting skills, improve academic skills, and achieve other desired goals that benefit students at all ages and grade levels (Epstein, 2013; Rutherford, Anderson, & Billig, 1997)

With proper implementation of parent night, parents can be informed of any changes that affect the community, school, or their child's education. Parents' night should lend itself to parent input because eventually, parents and teachers need to work together to reach a common goal so their children can receive the best education. Throughout the parent night meetings, they can also voice any concerns or provide positive feedback. School-based involvement has been defined as attending school programs such as PTA meetings, open houses, volunteering at

school, attending extracurricular activities, and communicating with parents and school personnel (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Keith and Lichtman, 1994). Parents enjoy and are very appreciative when they are informed of campus decisions and can take part in those important choices. If parents can experience connections with teachers, other parents from the school, and administrators, then actual involvement happens like the improvement of the teacher-parent relationship, the parent-child discussion of school-related problems, and the family environment that supports learning (Allen, 2007; Blankstein, 2010; Carothers, 2018; Seginer, 2006).

District or campus leaders need to address parents' motivational beliefs, because parents will be able to advocate more for the education students receive. Many parents work countless hours to provide for the family, so going physically to the campus is impossible. It is a great idea to add a number in the parent link, a section to the school website where they can express their concerns or give constructive feedback. Although not all parents might be technology experts, it would also be a great idea to implement virtual meetings with parents of those who are constantly unable to make any after school or parent/teacher conference meetings, and if they lack any type of expertise, the school can provide parents with technology training, for example, classes such as "Ingles Sin Barreras" for Spanish-speaking parents, technology workshops, or campus decision trainings. According to Epstein (2013), students are best served when schools help families establish supportive home environments for learning, provide two-way systems of communication about school programs and student progress, actively recruit and organize help from parents, facilitate at-home learning, involve parents from all race and socioeconomic backgrounds as representatives and leaders on school committees, and identify and effectively integrate community resources to strengthen school programs.

School parental involvement initiatives should be evaluated yearly and modified on the success they have according to each set expectation. Campus administration should be ready to make changes yearly, adapt to parent needs, and keep in mind that every year there is a new influx of students. Academic achievement is positively influenced by the existence of healthy parent-child relationships, which generate a kind of supportive discussion (Vincent & Neis, 2011) Overall, parental involvement initiatives should be more intentional to where parents are made aware of any changes and are able to provide any feedback, where they can be constantly involved with their child's education.

### **Summary**

Research continues to indicate that any student whose parents are involved in their education shows academic progress compared to those who choose not to or may not be able to. Using Epstein's six types of engagement types strongly paves the road to a successful parental involvement that guides students to academic success. Educators can no longer reach stakeholders by sending out letters; they must be able to move forward with the new generation of parents and adapt to the innovative means of communication. As education continues to succeed, educators also need to self-motivate and support the education system. Parental involvement will continue to grow as campuses and districts actively monitor and devote the amount of time required to be able to have an efficient successful program that will not only improve campus participation and performance, but also the student achievement and parental support from parents and/or guardians.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHOD

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors that influenced the parental involvement program in student academic success. According to Epstein (2018), “Schools and parents must play an integral part in working collaboratively to enhance the child’s academic life in the home and at school, form strong partnerships and positive school experiences, and promote academic success” (pg.47). In the Rio Grande Valley, however, parents have many obstacles that impede their collaboration with the education system or are unaware of the benefits that their involvement may contribute to student academic success. Many students whose parents are not involved “fall through the cracks” and begin falling behind academically thus, increasing the academic gap. By looking at several barriers that impede parental involvement and guiding parents and identifying strategies, guidance can enhance the overall program and achieve higher goals for academic success.

#### **Research Design and Method**

A qualitative action research design was used to examine the magnitude of increased parental involvement and the effect on student engagement and academic success. Action research is a process of systematic reflection by individuals on their own professional practice (Frost, 2002). Action research is an enquiry which is carried out to understand, evaluate, and change educational practice (Bassey, 1998). The action research cycle can be characterized by action leading to critical reflection and then, perhaps, to further action (Dick, 2002).

Action research is about finding ways to improve practice, so it is about creating knowledge (McNiff, 2016). McNiff further mentions that it lends itself to action-based inquiry, participation, collaboration, and development of solutions to problems of everyday practice in local contexts.

Action research combines a substantive act with a research procedure; it is action disciplined by enquiry. “Action research is a personal attempt at understanding while engaged in a process of improvement and reform” (Hopkins, 2002, p. 42) It is also a term used to describe professionals studying their own practice in order to improve it (GTCW, 2002a). Action research is a flexible spiral process that allows action (change, improvement) and research (understanding, knowledge) to be achieved at the same time (Dick, 2002). Action research is about focusing on the learning process and improving it.

Authors such as Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), Holter and Schwartz-Barcott (1993), Zuber-Skerrit (1992) state that action research originated with Kurt Lewin, an American psychologist. Action research by Lewin (1946) was exemplified by the discussion of problems followed up by decisions on how to move forward. He described the practice as comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action and research leading to social action that uses a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the result of the action. Lewin was born in 1890 and died at the age of 56 in 1974. He espoused the use of social science as a means to help solve social conflicts and considered that the clarification of hypothetical, “if so” questions was fundamental to all social science research, which for Lewin included action research (Lewin, 1946). That was how Kurt Lewin, whose first ideas on what he called “action research” were set out in about 1934,

(Marrow, 1969) came to describe its characteristics after a series of practical experiences in the early 1940s. "No action without research; no research without action," Lewin concluded.

McKernan (1988 as cited in McKernan 1991) states that action research as a method of inquiry has evolved over the last century, and careful study of the literature shows "clearly and convincingly that action research is a root derivative of the scientific method reaching back to the Science in Education movement of the late nineteenth century." (McKernan, 1991). Three of the many definitions for action research are (1) a "systemic inquiry that is collective, collaborative, self-reflective, critical and undertaken by participants in the inquiry" (McCutcheon & Jung, 1990) (2) "a form of collective self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out" (Kemmis & McTaggart 1990); (3) "action research aims to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable ethical framework" (Rapoport 1970 as cited in McKernan 1991).

The goal with this study was to be able to improve Sunview's parental involvement program and allow constructive feedback with the information provided to guide this action research study into a successful and improved program. Throughout this process, the information gathered was used to be able to modify and accommodate the program to better serve the needs of the campus. Relevant and useful information was gathered from frontline educators as to what parents were expressing that was missing from the parental involvement on campus and ideas expressed to facilitate for them.

## Research Questions

The following questions guided this research:

Q1. What are obstacles that impede parental involvement in student academic life?

Q2. What social factors influence parental involvement in student school life?

Q3. How can all stakeholders collaborate to enhance parental involvement and promote student academic success?

Q4. How has Sunview Middle School failed to communicate with stakeholders?

As the questions chosen for this research were pondered, it was critical that the research aligned with the needs of the campus. Question one states: “What are obstacles that impede parental involvement in the students' academic life?” Critical to each student’s life, the obstacles that parents have will always affect the amount of parents’ time spent with assistance to their children’s academic achievement. The more time that parents have away from their children, the less support they get either with homework, phone calls, or by participating in campus activities. Although it is understood that all parents seek what is best for their family, educators tend to put aside student education and not get involved until unfortunately, someone receives a phone call of something unfortunate that happened to their child. Life will always happen; the past cannot be controlled because it has already happened, the future cannot be controlled because it hasn’t happened yet, but the present can be controlled and focused on guiding students’ futures for the best.

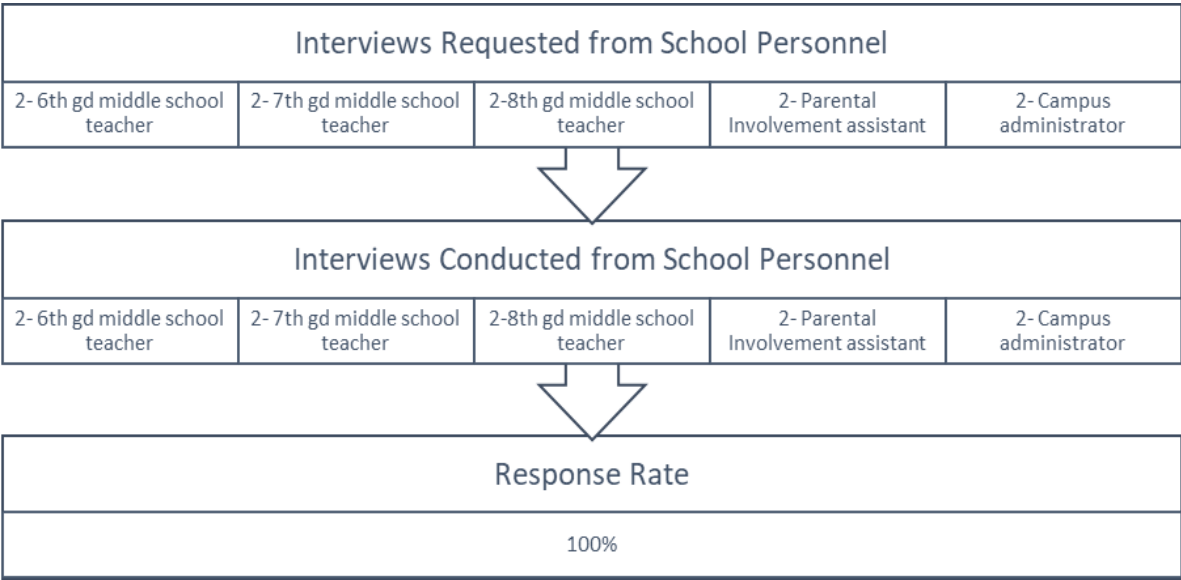
Question two states, “What social factors influence parental involvement in the student’s school life?” Having students involved in after curricular activities, tutorials, UIL academics, after school club organizations, athletics, and fine arts will always be a reason to support, encourage, and participate in children’s education. Having students participate in these programs

requires a lot of parental support and requires that all participants work together, and parents will always advocate for their children and their extracurricular activities.

Question three states: “How can all stakeholders collaborate to enhance parental involvement and promote student academic success?” As we dive into this question, it is always important to remember that education is a two-way street where parents and students meet the education system in the middle. Parents should be actively engaged, and if they are actively engaged, it is important for them to be able to voice their opinion about programs and activities happening in their children’s school. Stakeholders can voice possibilities and needs they require from the education system. Bringing both the parents and the education system together can open the door for many possibilities for students if constant communication is happening and both parties are working collaboratively for the academic success of every student.

The final question reads: “How has your school failed to communicate with stakeholders?” As parents need to be given a means to voice their concerns, opinions, and best recommendations for the program to move forward. Lack of communication from prior administration has been a problem. Parents have expressed concern about the lack of communication concerning student activities that are late in planning where they cannot ask for days off to be able to participate or the lack of the technology made accessible but not used for the greater benefit. The lack of time given to advise parents has always been a revolving problem. Many parents’ only requirement is that the information provided to them is given with ample time to plan accordingly.





**Figure 1**  
*Response Interview Rate*

**Population and Participants**

The chart above shows the response interview rate with the selected participants of Sunview Middle School in which 100% of the participants willingly were part of the research. This study involved certified teachers ranging from seven to ten years of teaching or more at Sunview Middle School. Teachers within the seven to ten years of teaching have been exposed to several parental involvement programs, trends, and changes in district and/or campus policy, which assisted in providing accurate constructive feedback, while others who had less years may not have been exposed to those scenarios. The campus personnel selected have been serving the public a range of years in Sunview Middle School, which served as accurate information to this research as some of these individuals have been employed in Sunview Middle School since it opened in August of 2010. Personnel selected have a sense of belonging and have been through

different administrators who have served as liaisons within the campus and the community. These individuals justified with personal experiences the unsuccessfulness or successfulness of prior programs that have been in place since the opening of the campus. The researchers also involved the campus parental involvement assistant (PIA) and the campus administrator in charge of the parental involvement program for further research. The participants interviewed were as follows: Mrs. Angelica Chavez, parental involvement assistant, Mr. Antonio Salinas, the supervising administrator of the parental involvement program, Mrs. Veronica Rodriguez, sixth-grade teacher, Mrs. Maria Delgado, seventh-grade teacher, and Mrs. Carmen Martinez, eighth-grade teacher. The participants were selected according to their years of experience, their connection with the staff, and their abilities to make huge impacts with all stakeholders who have dealt with parental involvement at some point during their career.

Mrs. Angelica Chavez works as the parental involvement secretary and has been in this position for 10 years. Mrs. Chavez has been the pillar of the parental involvement program as she tries to support parents as much as possible. The connection Mrs. Chavez has with the community is incredible as parents will follow her lead to assist any campus activity. When it comes to after-hour activities, there were not many educator volunteers to help, and it took Mrs. Chavez 10 to 15 minutes to make phone calls, and by the time the activity started, there was a big crowd of volunteers. For this reason, I chose to interview Mrs. Chavez; throughout the years in her position, her role as the parental involvement assistant has inspired many parents and students to collaborate with the campus. Having had her own children attend Sunview Middle School spoke volumes for the campus, but also allowed her to see the flaws in the Sunview Middle School parental involvement program. She explained that she hardly received any notifications of initiatives, problems, or activities that were happening in the three years her

children were on campus. Mrs. Chavez provided many great ideas that would intel the success of the program.

Mr. Antonio Salinas, the supervising administrator of the parental involvement program, who like Mrs. Chavez, provided as much as possible to stay within board policy and guidelines. His guidance along with the side-by-side work with Mrs. Chavez has been a part of the parental involvement for many years. This individual was critical to this research as he holds the reasons why some goals or initiatives have been in place for so long, modified or not modified, and aligned those goals with campus demographics. After a deep confidential conversation, he explained that the prior head principal would not care to take time to align to demographics or time to listen or invite stakeholders to speak their minds. He stated they knew there was a problem with the program, but if the head principal didn't mind it falling apart, why should he go against his directives?

Mrs. Veronica Rodriguez is a sixth-grade teacher who has been in the education field for nine years and has taught in several middle schools. Her mobility has given her the opportunity to criticize and compare these programs. This participant gave constructive feedback as far as how involved parents had been in other similar demographics compared to Sunview Middle School. Her feedback was critical to adapt our program and avoid redundant goals to be implemented.

The seventh-grade teacher, Mrs. Maria Delgado, has been on the same campus since it opened back in August of 2010 and has seen different administrators in charge of the program. She is extremely vital to her part in this research. Mrs. Delgado has worked under different administrations during her tenure at Sunview Middle School. Her recall of information provided several components in moving forward with the parental involvement program already in

existence. She worked under two main head principles of Sunview Middle School; both, as she recalls, were only data-driven but not successful and let the logistics of the campus fall apart. Thinking back to her conversations with them, she stated that conversation and support were asked from them to build the bridge of communication as some of the problems teachers had in the classroom were not followed up by the administration.

Mrs. Carmen Martinez is a veteran eighth-grade teacher who brought an open mind to the table ready to move forward as the campus was steered by the principal. Mrs. Martinez was chosen as a co-pilot to this program as her love and support from the staff were able to shift mentalities to adapt to any new initiatives, making an easier transition. Being teacher of the year and selected by most of her colleagues spoke volumes about her. She also served as campus SBDM and district SBDM, being the voice for teachers not only from Sunview Middle School, but also at the district level. Her connection with the staff has given her the ability to communicate with anyone and have the buy in to anything being implemented. Her constructive feedback was critical as her transparency assisted the researcher in being intentional during this study.

### **The Story of Sunview Middle School**

Sunview opened for enrollment back in August of 2010. Although it is now almost 13 years old, Sunview is a new campus compared to other middle schools in the area, most of which have been open for over 20 years. Built in the east side of Edinburg, Texas, the campus serves the suburban outskirts of the city. This campus immediately stands out for the high percentage of Hispanics who are enrolled on this campus, which lends itself to the possibility that as a Hispanic student whose parents were not involved due to high hours of work, this was a similar case. Rio Grande Valley has a high percentage of minority parents and economically disadvantaged

families who intertwine with living near the border. These demographics align with Sunview Middle School, which has a high percentage of economically disadvantaged, 82.3% to be exact, and 47.8% of emergent bilingual students. The Texas Education Agency report card shows that Sunview Middle School (pseudonym name) has a total enrollment of 904 students, meaning that there is a high percent of parents who may not attend school due to long hours of work to be able to provide a decent lifestyle: 98% percent of students are Hispanics, 1% White, and 1% African-American.

Table 1  
TEA Report

	Campus	District	State		Campus	District	State
<b>Attendance Rate (2020-21)</b>				<b>Class Size Averages by Grade or Subject</b>			
	94.9%	95.3%	95.0%	<b>Elementary</b>			
<b>Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity</b>				Kindergarten	-	17.5	18.7
African American	0.6%	0.3%	12.8%	Grade 1	-	18.4	18.7
Hispanic	97.6%	98.0%	52.8%	Grade 2	-	17.4	18.6
White	1.2%	1.0%	26.3%	Grade 3	-	17.7	18.7
American Indian	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	Grade 4	-	17.7	18.8
Asian	0.5%	0.5%	4.8%	Grade 5	-	18.6	20.2
Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	Grade 6	14.7	13.7	19.2
Two or More Races	0.0%	0.2%	2.9%	<b>Secondary</b>			
<b>Enrollment by Student Group</b>				English/Language Arts	12.4	13.8	16.3
Economically Disadvantaged	82.3%	82.2%	60.7%	Foreign Languages	17.0	19.0	18.4
Special Education	8.4%	7.5%	11.6%	Mathematics	15.0	15.1	17.5
Emergent Bilingual/EL	47.8%	37.3%	21.7%	Science	15.1	16.3	18.5
<b>Mobility Rate (2020-21)</b>				Social Studies	17.4	16.2	19.1
	8.5%	11.1%	13.6%				

### Informed Consent and Confidentiality

Discussing confidentiality with the participants at the beginning of data collection and respecting their autonomy were necessary for obtaining informed consent and building trust (Petrova et al., 2016). The researcher first began this study by requesting authorization to

conduct research (Appendix A) from the superintendent of schools/school district. Once the approval was granted, volunteers' participation from teachers, parental involvement assistant, and administrator was sought (Appendix B). Participants were given full transparency of the research and purpose behind it. Participants were given a pseudonym for complete confidentiality and a letter of informed consent (Appendix C) in case they wanted to withdraw at any given time.

### **Data Sources and Collection**

Before starting any of the data collection, a meeting was held with the former middle school principal to discuss forms needed and confidentiality of the district, campus, and staff on this selected campus. Once approval from campus principal was given, an email to make the superintended aware of the research conducted in the district was sent with all the forms signed, reassuring that pseudonyms were given. Participants then had the opportunity to ask any questions before the study began. Once those questions were addressed to provide clarity in the research, then the study began with the actual research questions.

The parental involvement program data was analyzed to see the number of events designed to involve parents, and selected personnel were interviewed to check the dependability of the current methods in place. One-to-one, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant. During multiple phone call observations, data was collected from campus personnel and parental involvement program evaluation was completed in order to run a more efficient program that targeted new and subtle techniques. Interviews helped to understand selected personnel perceptions of the parental involvement program in place and provided insight as to the perceived obstacles as they were encountered while communicating with parents. Results and information given compared how each grade level was impacted as students grew in

age and maturity level and having immediate access to the information provided by the participants was integral to the outcome. Demographics were evaluated to proceed with a clearer view of possible factors that affected the area. Examining the possible factors served as a guide to address and support the parental involvement program and its constituents.

This process included individual interviews that were useful and provided credibility and validity to the research. As the information was disseminated, patterns were visible that pointed in the direction that needed to be addressed as either a campus or a district issue. Parental involvement initiatives needed to be revised, looking at social factors that hindered or supported the program, while managing communication and awareness for stakeholders to be aware of how to better prepare for parental involvement.

Having built a rapport with campus personnel facilitated the process and entrustment with questionnaires, observations, and intentional questioning. Throughout this research, the researcher asked a target set of questions that assisted him in finding credibility for the data received and gathered by stakeholders. As the information was investigated, patterns appeared that pointed in the direction that needed to be addressed as either a campus or a district issue. Parental involvement initiatives needed to be revised, looking at social factors that hindered or supported, while managing communication and awareness for stakeholders to be aware of how to better prepare for parental involvement.

The selected teachers were observed during their conference periods as they made their daily parental contact. The teachers regularly make phone calls to parents to discuss behavioral issues, grades, assignments and or area/s of need. The researcher was able to observe the form of communication by campus teachers to the parents and or guardians of the students. Epstein et al. (2011) characterized it as the capacity to plan compelling kinds of school-to-home and home-to-

school collaborations about school and student progress. Reciprocal communication encourages positive teamwork between the home and school environment to track student success. Being able to observe the teachers allowed me to see similarities and differences between grade levels and professional staff.

During the time on campus, the parental involvement assistant (PIA) and the campus administrator were observed as they made attempts to improve relationships between the campus and parents. This assisted in understanding how the administrator and parental involvement assistant worked collaboratively for the overall success of the program. The logistics of the parental involvement program were compared through the lens of front office personnel and administration and the selected teachers. Being able to observe the parental involvement assistant (PIA) and the campus administrator in charge of the program, allowed the researcher to see the alignment amongst the first responders of the program.

Along with teacher observations, teacher, parental involvement (PIA), and administrator interviews were included. These interviews allowed personnel to provide explanations and reflect on the process they currently held. These individuals had firsthand constructive feedback, as they made attempts to arrange meetings between parents and campus personnel. This also allowed the researcher to review how parents felt and exposed any expressed concerns on the parental involvement for the campus. During the observations, the researcher reviewed fieldnotes taken in order to find common problems, solutions, and/or responses from parents.

Throughout the semi-structured interviews, a set of questions that were designed to ask specific topics to better understand the lack of parental involvement were asked individually.



Table 2

*Interview Questions*

Interview #1	Interview #2
<p>Focus: Obstacles in Parental Involvement</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How long have you been an educator?</li> <li>2. How do you reach parents/guardians in your classroom?</li> <li>3. How do you feel parents/guardians feel about teachers/staff reaching out?</li> <li>4. Describe what parents communicate to you in why they are not involved in their children’s academics.</li> <li>5. During a parent/guardian phone call /conference how do parents react?</li> <li>6. What do you think of the kind of parents/guardians we have? Do they provide support?</li> <li>7. Have your views on parental support changed throughout the years? If so, how?</li> <li>8. Is there anything else you would like to tell/ask me?</li> </ol>	<p>Focus: Communication</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What can you tell me about parent communication?</li> <li>2. Do you use parent phone calls, conferences, visiting teacher as a mode of communication? If so, who effective are they?</li> <li>3. How you do you think using technology improves communication in the classroom?</li> <li>4. Tell me how you go about communicating with those parents who are a no show.</li> <li>5. How do you feel about the number of parents/ guardians who support the education of their children?</li> <li>6. How do you think students will react to parents who are more involved in their education?</li> <li>7. What resources are available to improve communication?</li> <li>8. Is there anything else you would like to tell/ask me?</li> </ol>

The sampling technique used for this study was convenience sampling. The participants were selected by analyzing campus staff with seven to ten years of experience and above, then by those who communicated in both in English and Spanish to stakeholders, and finally, by talking to them and providing the assurance that pseudonyms were given to avoid any retaliation if that was one of their concerns. Participants targeted from Sunview Middle School: 1 parental involvement secretary, 1 administrator, also including, 1 teacher from each of the grade levels on campus (1- 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, 1-7<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, 1- 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher). Participants were asked to sign a consent form indicating their agreement to participate in semi-structured interviews at the school to the best of their abilities. The results of this case study provided a more transparent

answer to the barriers that have been identified as to why some stakeholders have little or no involvement.

### **Data Analysis**

The data collected in this study included teacher conference observations and teacher, parental involvement assistant observations, and administrator interviews. All documented fieldnotes were reviewed throughout the process to investigate similar patterns and areas of improvement. Parent contact logs were analyzed for patterns amongst different grade level teachers as well as commonalities amongst the campus. By conducting a document analysis on the notes taken when parent phone calls were made, a clearer picture of what type of discussions were happening and the common time when parents did not answer and or answered throughout the day. Campus data and notes from the parental involvement assistant (PIA) and administrator were reviewed and adjusted for a better outcome of the parental involvement program. These notes served to create a more intentional parental involvement program and will aide in adjusting the logistics of the program for overall student achievement.

Participants were informed that data collected remained confidential and was stored on a encrypted, password-protected computer. Data was coded before it was shared with advisors or committee members. All data collected was stored in a locked file that was password protected. After three years, identifying data will be destroyed. A data collection protocol will be created to keep all the information organized and secured for the use of this research only. In qualitative data analysis, a code is a researcher-generated interpretation that symbolizes or “translates” data (Namey, 2008) thus, attributes meaning to each individual datum for later purposes of pattern detection, categorization, theme, assertion or proposition development, theory building, and other analytic processes. A pattern is repetitive, regular, or consistent occurrences of action/data

that appear more than twice. “At a basic level, pattern concerns the relation between unity and multiplicity.

A pattern suggests a multiplicity of elements gathered into the unity of a particular arrangement” (Namey, 2008). Qualitative researchers seek patterns as somewhat stable indicators of human ways of living and working to render the world “more comprehensible, predictable and tractable” (Stenner, p. 143). Patterns become more trustworthy evidence for findings since patterns demonstrate habits, salience, and significance in people's daily lives. They help confirm descriptions of people's "five Rs": routines, rituals, rules, roles, and relationships (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018) ←add to reference list. Discerning these trends is a way to solidify observations into concrete instances of meaning. Bernard (2018) succinctly states that analysis is “the search for patterns in data and for ideas that help explain why those patterns are there in the first place” (p. 355).

### **Interview Response Rates**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three teachers (one from sixth grade level, one from seventh grade, and one from eighth grade level), one parental involvement assistant (PIA), and one campus. The semi-structured interview is a type of interview that lends itself to give interviewees more opportunities to fully express themselves with somewhat of a guidance from questions, a sentence starter, in an easier way of putting it. To protect the identity of each of the participants in this study, all participants were given a pseudonym. The middle school sixth grade level teacher was Teacher 1, the middle school seventh grade teacher was Teacher 2, and the middle school eighth grade teacher was Teacher 3. The initials PIA were used for the parental involvement assistant, and administrator was used for the administrator supervising the parental involvement program.

Once data were collected from all the interviewees and all interview recordings were finished, the analysis process began. When reviewing the audio recordings for clear audio, the transcription process took place and made sure all information was transferred 100% exactly from each participant. Coding began immediately as all the data was provided and similar themes were raised from each participant transcription. Similar themes were color coded, and it was evident that this particular topic had been a barrier in the school parental involvement program. The coding consisted of several terms that each interviewee kept repeating throughout the interview process.

### **Open Coding**

Open coding aims at identifying the phenomena and expressing the data. Units of meaning classify expressions (single words, short sequences of words) in order to attach annotations and concepts (Flick, 2009, p. 307) For example, researchers read and re-read interview transcriptions, field notes, and associated data sources involved in the data collection, searching for thematic connectivity leading to thematic patterns (Williams, 2019). In practice, the researcher needs to sift through informants' responses and organize similar words and phrases, concept-indicators, in broad initial thematic domains (Williams, 2019). This type of coding in qualitative research allows researchers to identify, organize, and build theory. Charmaz (2008) advises that detailed, line-by-line coding promotes a more trustworthy analysis that “reduces the likelihood of imputing your motives, fears, or unresolved personal issues to your respondents and to your collected data” (p. 94). Once interviews were recorded, decoding and transcribing began to pinpoint the common information provided by the selected personnel. Two rounds of semi-structured 45 minute to an hour interviews were set aside to discuss the interview questions and any extra topics the participants wanted to discuss. The participants had prior access to the questions, so

that they could gather their thoughts and avoid any mistakes once the recording had started. During the reviewing of the notes, the researcher looked for a descriptive code that summarized the primary topic and was able to group them by patterns of repetitive occurrences of information appearing numerous times. The lack of communication, technology implementation, and expectations both for the campus and the parents were the constant words being repeated throughout the interviews. A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data (Saldaña, 2021). Patterns were identified to find similar coding in this study. Reflective notes were also a part of the staff observations conducted to be able to reflect on common problems. During the observations that were made in addition to the interviews, the field notes were also reviewed and compared to the repeated codes. The connection between the field notes from the observations and the codes from the interviews were like the responses given by the participants. (Namey, 2008) purported that data reduction encompasses editing, grouping, and summarizing and takes place during the preliminary phases of the study, so there is a reduction without losing important information. As Namey (2008) explained, data reduction is a form of analysis that sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards, and organizes data in such a way that “final” conclusions can be drawn and verified. Overall, it’s a method of refining information and being able to weed out extra information not needed in the research. The chart on page 43 illustrates an example of how observation and interview data were analyzed to determine codes:

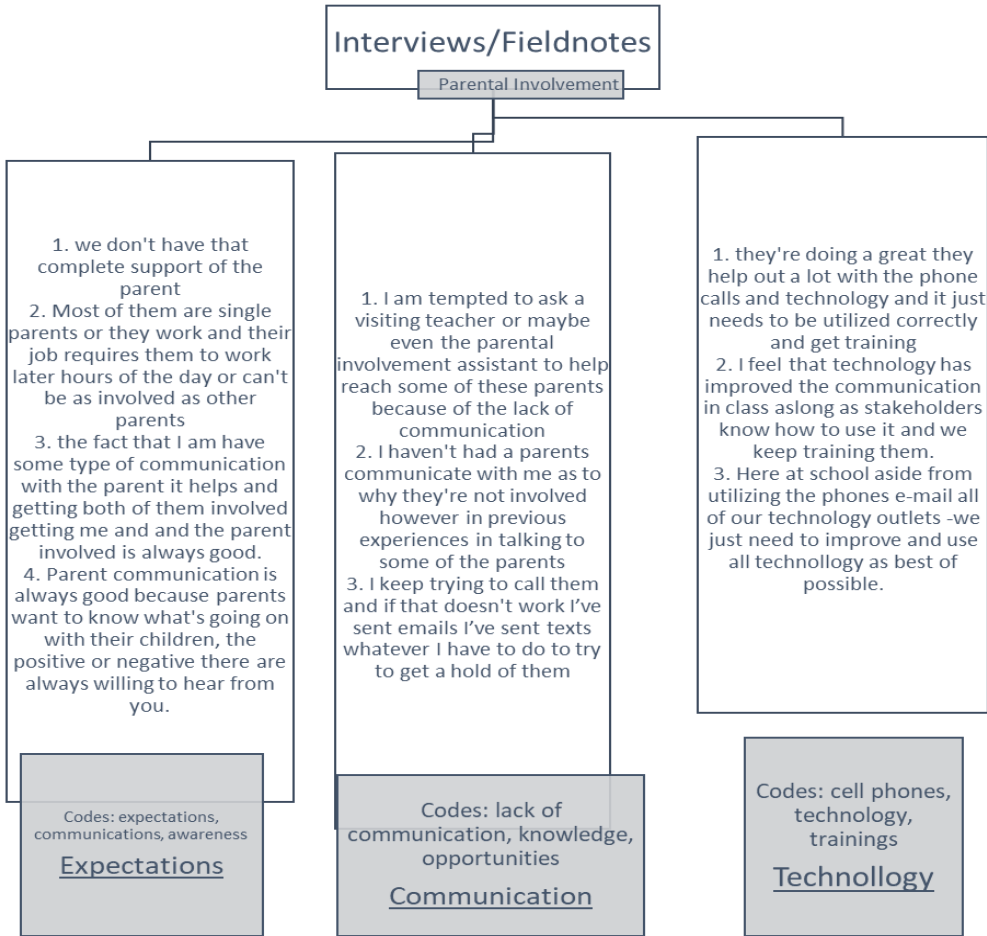


Figure 2

*Coding Data*

**Methods of Establishing Trustworthiness**

The qualitative case study design of the research analyzed the obstacles that parents may encounter when attempting to attend a school function, communication amongst campus and stakeholders, relationship between educators and parents. Single-case designs require careful investigation to avoid misrepresentation and to maximize the investigator's access to the evidence (Tellis, 1997). Creswell's six step model helps assist with trustworthiness as it serves as a guide to cover every angle for credibility. Creswell's (2017) six-step model (i.e., developing

the research paradigm, choosing sampling techniques, selecting participants, collecting the data through interviews, observing, recording, and transcribing any field notes of parents and school personnel) was utilized to analyze the data revealed in this study, ensuring its validity and credibility. First-hand information was utilized to provide actual facts of obstacles, experiences, both positive and negative, with the parental involvement system already in place. Being an educator will also serve as a form of providing a sense of trustworthiness as the end goal after this research study is done is to improve how information is provided to parents to improve the academic success of the students.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

This chapter presents the data analyses and findings discovered for this research study. The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of teachers and administrators on the impact that parental involvement had to facilitate greater student engagement and academic success. Detailed and concise information was provided by addressing the following research questions used to guide this study:

Q1. What are obstacles that impede parental involvement in student academic life?

Q2. What social factors influence parental involvement in student school life?

Q3. How can all stakeholders collaborate to enhance parental involvement and promote student academic success?

Q4. How has Sunview Middle School failed to communicate with stakeholders?

After reviewing fieldnotes and decoding the interviews with staff, three main themes were revealed: lack of communication, technology implementation, and expectations amongst all stakeholders. The researcher was able to gather the summary of phone calls, and after the analyzing the data, it was discovered that stakeholders were leaning to ways to get into constant communication with campuses, were able to expand their knowledge in technology, and a sense of expectation in both parties was found to help the children and find common ground for all parties to be successful and have open communication.



## Discussion of Themes

Communication	Technology	Expectations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Categories: Successful Communication Between Home and School</li> <li>• Codes: lack of communication, knowledge, opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Categories: Technology Implementation</li> <li>• Codes: cell phones, technology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Categories: Expectations for Parents and School</li> <li>• Codes: expectations, communication, awareness</li> </ul>

Figure 3

### *Themes*

#### **Theme 1: Successful Communication Between Home and School with Parental Involvement Opportunities**

The author began the open coding based on key words/phrases and the contexts suggested by theme that can be seen in the following paragraphs. There are several phrases that consist of Theme 1: Communication, Home and School, and Parental Involvement. There are twelve sentences or short paragraphs that support communications:

1. Parent communication is always good because parents want to know what's going on with their children; the positive or negative there are always willing to hear from you. Overall, as a campus we are lacking support.
2. I have some type of communication with the parents; it helps, and getting both of them involved, getting me and the parent involved is always good. I would like to add some kind of technology into place, though.
3. I feel that technology has improved communication in class.
4. We need more support, but they work a lot of hours and lack the knowledge, or we don't have any communication with the parents.
5. The skyward system gave us the opportunity to have a different phone number; it provides us with updated information.
6. Negative Communication: I feel like parents can be a little hesitant to talk to the teachers sometimes because you don't want to hear the bad news; they know that it's bad news.

Positive Communications: You do have those who are supportive and who do answer their phones and you have a good communication system going with you whether it's via email or phone call.

7. So far this year in my experience they have been supportive [about the phone call or conference communication].
8. This school year I do contact parents if this student is having a behavior issue or maybe absent a lot and you're getting behind any type of dilemma.
9. The parents are not answering their phone due to long hours of work.
10. Maybe even the parental involvement assistant to help reach some of these parents because of the lack of communication and would hope we adopt some form of application to communicate with them.
11. Technology improves communication in the classroom such as I have used remind skyward google classroom different methodologies like that so that I can reach [the parents].
12. [Dual] communication part but I think a lot has to do with the fact that it's a two-way system, like the parents to try to communicate with the teachers as well not just teachers to parent but the parent to teacher as well. We need to be able to find a tech app to help.

**Parental involvement.** The following shows an example of Theme 1:

I have had phone conferences, not so much in person just yet I might have not used the visiting teacher as formatting communication however i am tempted to ask a visiting teacher or maybe even the parental involvement assistant to help reach some of these parents because of the lack of communication and would hope we adopt some form of application to communicate with them.

### **Author's Reflections, Comments, and Analyses**

The following are the authors' reflections and comments based on the phrases and the contexts. As we look at the possible causes that can hinder parental involvement, the lack of communication between Sunview Middle School and the parents served by this campus stood out in the lack of awareness on this important issue. School and family partnerships and involvement are not a "one size fits all" model; numerous factors go into the level of engagement, involvement, understanding, and the perspective of each party. (McWayne &

Melzi, 2014). Educators should be able to communicate clearly, sensitively, frequently and model the expectations needed to have successful parental involvement and support from home. The positive effect of school-based involvement on educational outcomes is explained by parent – teacher interaction that (1) acquaints parents (particularly of lower grades children) with children’s homework assignments and consequently, facilitates parents’ home-based involvement (Epstein, 2013); (2) reduces school absenteeism (Epstein et al., 2011) and discipline problems (Epstein, 2013) and (3) fosters parent – teacher cooperation, mutual respect of values, and greater parents’ endorsement of school goals and school personnel that indirectly promote children’s school motivation ( Epstein et al., 2011). We should constantly communicate with stakeholders in their native language for them to understand. Campus lack of bilingualism is a huge contribution to why they have a poor program in place, and the communication between school and home may not be as accurate as it should be. As we look at communication, the lack of knowledge from stakeholders due to poor communication from the campus was very evident from the notes. However, according to Mitchell et al. (2015) state, Parents crave communication—real communication that specifically describes how their child is doing, tells them what is going on at school, and gives them practical and reasonable ways they can help their children at home. Successful communication amongst all parties can assist in proper guidance for students in need of direction.

During the observations, Mrs. Angelica Chavez had some irate parents that even after given reasoning and her professionalism, still felt they needed to talk to an administrator because they felt at some point, the information given was not accurate from the parental involvement assistant. As Mr. Antonio Salinas took the call and let the parents vent their frustration, many of the points were valid: Where was the communication? Was there a letter sent or link to

Parentlink? Was anything posted on social media? Those were questions that any parent might have also posed. The administrator expressed they were good points and would make sure to address those for the best of the program and communication, but as Mrs. Chavez had informed the parents, the information provided was correct. Parent frustration was evident; although the information was correct, many parents still become irate as the information wasn't what they expected or felt it was not favorable to them.

As the phone calls were taken, observations from different lenses were taken. The parental involvement assistant, Mrs. Angelica Chavez, at times, showed frustration and was thankful that the administration was able to step in; however, that was not always the case as the administration gets busy with different cases. The data also provided the PIA the ability to observe how the administrator took a certain call and subsequently, was able to listen as she provided stated board policy and procedures to parents, advising them as to if this was either a state or district procedure and not a campus random decision. Parents, after hearing the answers, tended to calm down and changed their tone and asked for a possible solution to the problem. The selected teachers, Mrs. Veronica Rodriguez, Mrs. Maria Delgado, and Mrs. Carmen Martinez expressed that the parental involvement program should provide a lot more for the students, if everyone played their part and contributed to making communication, following through with parent/teacher requests help to support the academic success of the students. They felt the buy-in was missing and that parents should have the opportunity to express concerns and contribute to campus success. Teachers expressed the problem with the lack of communication and lack of knowledge. The sixth-grade teacher, Mrs. Verónica Rodriguez, mentioned:

Parents in this area the sixth-grade because they don't know any better, and a lot of parents in this area is not only do they not know any better some of them are under the

impression that if they make phone calls or if they reach out, they might not have proper documentations to be here legally and they might be sent back, so they are scared to call.

In this case, Mrs. Veronica Rodriguez experienced the daily battle parents fight to be in The United States of American illegally. Yet, seventh grade teacher, Mrs. Maria Delgado stated, “Parents provide as much as they can, you know some parents are a lot more involved than others you see it in and it doesn't mean that they have to be educated or anything, but some most parents value education so they try to be supportive to their children but not in all cases.” Mrs. Delgado’s experience reminds me of my parents as they both were migrants and stopped their education in the fifth grade but always valued education and gave us motivation to succeed.

The eighth-grade teacher, Mrs. Carmen Martinez, felt the opposite from her colleague in seventh grade. Mrs. Martinez response was:

I feel at least with my kids that I have this year, some parents are supportive, but a lot of them I feel not really. When it comes to supporting your children academically, you can’t lack that part, because the student is not responsible enough, doesn't have any reliability for themselves, they come to school or they're absent consistently, so like we don't have that complete support of the parent.

Going hand in hand with the stakeholders working long hours, parental Involvement assistant, Mrs. Angelica Chavez stated that most of them do...

The ones who work late or don't communicate with us, we try to communicate with them, but then we reach them out on a daily basis, and even on the day they have off. They apologize for not being involved and that they wish they had been involved more often.

Yet, all these efforts are given by the educators on a daily basis, and some may or may not be successful, but the supervising administrator, Mr. Antonio Salinas made a great point that

many administrators should take in to consideration by stating the following: “I really think that as administrators we need to support our teachers and make an effort to call parents, especially those that our teachers have called two, three times and yet no contact.” Administrators have more resources that we can offer to our teachers, but in reality, not all administrators do that, and it is unfortunate that many are not willing to go the extra mile.

In the above cases, we heard the Sunview Middle School educators express that there is a lack of education, knowledge, or exposure to public education. There are numerous reasons for this such as a lack of time or energy (due to long hours of heavy physical labor, for example), embarrassment or shyness about one's own educational level or linguistic abilities, a lack of understanding or information about the structure of the school and accepted communication channels, perceived lack of welcome by teachers and administrators, and teachers and administrators' assumptions of parents' disinterest or inability to help with children's schooling (Burrell & Borrego, 2012).

## **Theme 2: Technology Support**

Theme 2 shows technology as a phrase. The author began the open coding based on key words/phrases and the contexts suggested by theme that can be seen in the following paragraphs. There are four sentences or short paragraphs that show the technological support needed in the parental involvement program at Sunview Middle School.

Technology. The following are examples of Theme 2:

1. It's been very effective, because if I have for instance, a child that's missing assignment or is behind on any assignment, the fact that I had some type of communication with the parent it helps and getting both of them involved getting me and the parent involved is always good. I would like to add some kind of technology into place though.

2. Well, it provides the student with different varieties of learning so technology some we have some kids that are more visual learners, and we have other ones that are audio or audio learners, so I feel that technology has improved the communication in class.
3. I have used remind skyward google classroom different methodologies like that so that i can reach them but i don't quite get anything back, parents are also not trained as they should.
4. Here at school aside from utilizing the phones e-mail all of our technology outlets that we do have a lot of front office support we can try to get into contact administration that can help with the communication part but I think a lot has to do with the fact that it's a two way system like the parents to have to try to communicate with the teachers as well not just teachers to parent but the parent to teacher as well

#### **Author Reflections and Comments and Analysis Based on the Above Text from Participants' Conversations and Statements**

The following are the authors' reflections and comments based on the phrases and the contexts. The rapid changes in technology have created a need for changes in the parental involvement program for campuses and districts. Technology can be used to promote communication between parents and teachers (Rogers & Wright, 2008). Administration and educators should be technology literate to be able to communicate successfully with stakeholders. With the rapid growth of technology and its applications, parental involvement has taken a different route from the traditional face-to-face parent, teacher, and administration conferences. Technology also holds promise to allow teachers more communication opportunities "not limited by school hours or location" (Brewer & Kallick, 1996, p. 181). Due to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, educators have modified the mode of communication amongst stakeholders due to requests from parents and or guardians. Because of the pandemic, a

sudden change happened during the 2019-2020 school year that has affected the way of communication since then. New ways of teaching, learning, and communicating led the majority of educators to go into a world where technology usage had to be embraced. Parents were and still are requesting virtual meetings and that homework be completed through *Google* slides, which allows more flexibility with childcare and more communication with campus and district personnel. In addition, infomercials, social media, applications, Parentlink, *Remind* app and many other means of communication came in to play to adapt to the new way of living. Valid concerns arose as not all families had smart phones, internet access, and laptops. Teachers expressed that with proper professional development and training for parents, technology could really change how they communicated with parents, especially those who work long hours. These responses are based on one of the semi-structured interviews performed. Sixth-grade teacher, Mrs. Veronica Rodriguez, mentioned that technology was a double edge sword, “It’s great for academics, but if not properly trained, then it defeats the purpose, same thing for our parents: if we provide the training, then it can enhance the way we communicate with our parents/guardians.” Looking at her response, this was one of the initiatives carried out for Sunview Middle School to provide training for all stakeholders who wanted to participate once the applications were given the green light to use.

In addition, seventh-grade teacher, Mrs. Maria Delgado, mentioned that “academically, it provides the student different varieties of learning; some kids that are more visual learners and we have other ones that are audio learners, so I feel that technology has improved the communication in class.”

Parents on the other hand, need training on various forms of communication offered at the middle school level. Going hand-in-hand with her colleagues’ comments in providing the



support for the parents, eighth-grade teacher, Mrs. Carmen Martinez, used her experienced in technology to reach out to parents:

I have used *Remind*, *Skyward*, *Google Classroom*, and different methodologies like that, so that I can reach them, but I don't quite get anything back since our parents are not properly trained and knowledgeable about all the forms of communication we can offer. I think that if we properly train stakeholders and encourage the use of communication, that'll be great.

Alluding to the prior comments about adding training for stakeholders, the parental involvement assistant also agreed by saying the following: "I think in some areas it did help our students, but some of the technology didn't help the parents because some of them are not technology wise. With proper training we should be able to reach them more."

Supervising administrator, Mr. Antonio Salinas, stated, "I feel that as a campus, we failed to train our stakeholders in the correct way to use technology."

Communication in any form promotes positive attitudes in parents and students, which can be an important part of a successful home and school partnership (Hiatt-Michael, 2001; Rideout et al., 2010). Additionally, communication often contributes to improved parental involvement (Balfanz, 2009). Because school communication practices are so fundamental to involving families in the education process, Sadiku (2019) suggests that teacher preparation and professional development programs should actively promote the development of communication skills for teachers. In many instances, a simple customer service professional development may just do the trick to encourage and increase parental involvement and communication amongst the teachers and parents.

### Theme 3: Expectations for Parents and School

There are three words/phrases used as thematic elements: *expectations*, *parents*, and *school*. When the author examined the three words separately, the author saw them in the contexts. The following phrases were stated during the one-to-one, semi-structured interviews. Expectations. The following sentence is an example of expectations:

1. So, I think that their student would respond better academically and even socially with their friends and then having that expectation from the parent would help with the responsibility aspect.

Parents. The following are examples about parents:

1. Parent communication is always good because parents want to know what's going on with their children, the positive or negative there are always willing to hear from you. Overall, as a campus we are lacking support.
2. I have some type of communication with the parents, it helps and getting both of them involved getting me and the parent involved is always good.
3. you have a variety of parents and I understand there's working parents out there and they may not be so involved but I feel that most parents want the best for their children they want them to be better than them so I know growing up in that situation my parents always push for a good education, we need more support but they work a lot of hours and lack the knowledge or we don't have any communication with them.
4. I'm kind of tempted just because it's so hard to reach some of the parents or have maybe the front office assisted me with phone calls.
5. I feel like parents can be a little hesitant to talk to the teachers sometimes because you don't want to hear the bad news; they know that it's bad news so ignore her phone calls.
6. I haven't had a parents communicate with me as to why they're not involved however in previous experiences in talking to some of the parents I know that I think I think that maybe they were there like whether they're legal or illegal here in the US big fear that maybe we are going to somehow report them in some way so they kind of fear getting involved into the academic system.
7. So far this year in my experience they have been supportive; however, I do have some parents who do not answer my phone calls. No matter how many times I do try to call them, they have not been rude or disrespectful; they do have good communication skills.

8. I feel at least with my kids I have this year, some parents are supportive, but a lot of them I feel not really.
9. They come to school or they're absent consistently, so we don't have that complete support of the parents.
10. I was a reading teacher working in the special education department I had a lot of the parents communicate well with me they had that support that their support of their child wanting to know how they're doing on a daily basis I feel like as the years have gone by they're less involved they don't quite ask the questions they kind of just leave it up to the educator to deal with the problem so I feel like it's been diminished and no support.
11. I do contact parents if their student is having a behavior issue or maybe absent a lot and they're getting behind any type of dilemma like that when it comes to their parent responding, it is a whole different story because a lot of these parents who do the children have these problems; a lot of the parents do not answer their phones.
12. To help reach some of these parents because of the lack of communication and would hope we adopt some form of application to communicate with them.
13. Parents are also not trained as they should be.
14. Parents are not as supportive to say to me call her back let me return her phone call let me respond to her e-mail anything like that, so it is a struggle.
15. I think it needs to increase because I think that life gets in the way a lot of the times, but their children come first, and I think that the lack of support, especially with the demographics in which they're living, a lot of the parents don't see education as number one; a lot of them see work as number one.
16. They'll know that you have the parents' support; they have the love and the care and the appreciation of what it is that they're doing in school, so I think that their student would respond better academically and even socially with their friends, and then having that expectation from the parent would help with the responsibility aspect.
17. I think a lot has to do with the fact that it's a two-way system, like the parents need to try to communicate with the teachers as well not just teachers to parent but the parent to teacher as well. We need to be able to find a tech app to help.

School. The following are examples of school:

1. I use various methods I have called via phone at school e-mail I haven't done text messaging but I'm kind of tempted just because it's so hard to reach some of the parents or have maybe the front office assisted me with phone calls.
2. They come to school or they're absent consistently, so we don't have that complete support of the parents.
3. This school year I do contact parents if their student is having a behavior issue or maybe absent a lot and you're getting behind any type of dilemma like that when it comes to their parents.
4. When it comes to their classwork to attendance to participating in something after school any events like that lack the support, and so a lot of these kids feel like they end up tuning into something or going the wrong way, rather than focusing on something better for themselves.
5. They have the love and the care and the appreciation of what it is that they're doing in school.
6. Here at school, aside from utilizing phones and e-mail, all of our technology outlets do have a lot of front office support; we can try to get into contact administration, and that can help with the communication part.

The following are the authors' reflections and comments and analysis based on the above text from participant conversations and statements. As we look at the support needed at Sunview Middle School, it is important to keep all stakeholder responses in mind as the program gets evaluated to be able to improve and increase the participation and academic success of the students.

### **School Expectations**

When we think about parental involvement, we think of just the communication component, and we normally don't think of behind-the-scenes components. Initiatives are big when dealing with parental involvement as goals should be updated yearly per student demographics. Lack of parental involvement could mean that a district or a campus can have unsuccessful initiatives that have not been monitored. Unfortunately, many campus personnel are not familiar with most initiatives that have been in place for their campus, hindering their

purpose. Lack of communication from their administration team leads to the lack of parental involvement implementation. Administration should monitor in a timely manner to address any concerning issues and be able to assist as many families as possible. Current goals are not updated yearly and do not correlate with the student demographics they serve. Perhaps, it is not necessary to reinvent the wheel, but modifications are needed to always serve stakeholders. As educators concur, there needs to be continual attention and ongoing research on ways to promote parental involvement (El Nokali et al., 2010). Schools and school districts should develop and disseminate clear goals and objectives for increasing parental involvement. Objectives should be measurable with measurements reflecting appropriate motivation and incentives (Zarate, 2007).

### **Parent Expectations**

A possible cause for limits in parental involvement could be that some students may not be receiving as much support at home, or they are coming from challenging homes with many difficulties. Research shows that children of involved parents tend to exhibit higher educational aspirations (Alba et al., 2011). Through years of experience, one has been able to see that many families deal with financial challenges. Student parents are faced with challenges that cause parental involvement to be ineffective. Parent cultural norms of working extra hours to support the family may be a result of little or no time to get involved with their children's academic needs or become engaged with campus functions. Each student and family demographics are different and determine how much involvement is received from them. In the region, Latinos generally have higher levels of family stress, live in poverty, and have mental health problems. Schools and programs should frequently evaluate their interactions and activities with parents. Surveys and interviews can be used to understand parents' preferred involvement practices and how parents evaluate current activities (Zarate, 2007). According to Quilliams and Beran (2009),

when students experience low levels of parental involvement with regard to their education, they may not feel competent about learning or be motivated to do so, thus achieving only minimal academic success. Overall, “children who are at risk for poor academic achievement are likely to be seen as having low confidence, showing little motivation, and receiving little parental support” (Quilliams & Beran, 2009). Educators expressed the following when talking about parent’s expectations. Sixth-grade teacher, Mrs. Veronica Rodriguez, stated that some parents are busy, and they have jobs and unfortunately, some are single parents, so they have to work and provide so they can't afford to be as involved as they would like and their kid’s academic life.

Seventh-grade teacher, Mrs. Maria Delgado, said, “Most of them are single parents or they work, and their job requires them to work later hours of the day or can't be as involved as other parents.”

As we look at the campus and the community it serves, demographics play an important role in why their children’s education is put second; the long hours of work, being a single parent, and raising children is a great responsibility that one of the many duties will have to suffer to make the others work, and unfortunately, education in these cases is lacking.

Eighth-grade teacher, Mrs. Carmen Martinez, mentioned:

I think that maybe because they are illegal here in the United States, a big fear that maybe we are going to somehow report them in some way so they kind of fear getting involved into the academic system, plus the amount of hours they have to work to provide for their families is a factor.

Parental Involvement Assistant, Mrs. Angelica Chavez, mentioned:

I would say, we have two different kinds of parents, you have the parents that are the ones that work a lot, so they are not involved. Then some parents that are involved all the time, with students in athletics, you know the support and you know the parent involvements. I think just expectations need to be set for all of us. Educators and stakeholders both have one goal in common which is the academic success of students.

In addition, the supervising administrator, Mr. Antonio Salinas, expressed the following: “Expectations need to be explained to everyone as far as what we both need to do for the success of the children. We understand the long hours of work but at some point, we need parents to help us.”

Parent expectations was one of the key notes taken during the phone call observations. As the observations were conducted, Mrs. Angelica Chavez, the parental involvement assistant, began with a positive note and the reason why her call was important to them and the student. I noticed that the approach she took was totally different from any other approach seen or during the phone calls made. I understood as to why parents always supported her when she called. As she made these phone calls, she would put them on speaker, so the response could be heard; some parents became defensive, especially when talking about truancy and not showing up to meetings; her approach was to always tell them “the why” it was important. As she teamed up with Mr. Antonio Salinas, the supervising principal, he always reminded her to stick to board policy to make sure the law was never broken. He reiterated by saying to follow the procedures and reviewed single cases before any phone calls were made. When asked why they met before making phone calls, his answer was, “It’s always been done like this,” pointing out to me that the program has not been changed or modified to make it a better program.

Mrs. Veronica Rodriguez' phone calls dealt with student behavior, missing assignments, inviting them to school functions, and positive notes. Several parents as soon as they answered and the proper introduction was done, became defensive as to why their son or daughter was missing assignments and misbehaving in the classroom. Those invited to school functions stated they had to work long hours and said they would try to make it as their schedules were full. One unique circumstance occurred when she called to give a positive note on some students, she selected who previously had a history of bad behavior. Parents were surprised she took time to call and pointed that out, ending the phone call with much appreciation from the parents' side. Her mobility of campuses has given her the ability to pick from different environments and make them her own strategies a little more well-rounded.

On the other hand, Mrs. Maria Delgado, the seventh-grade teacher, has been on the same campus; while making phone calls during her conference, her approach was to target students who had many absences, who were late or missing assignments, and had behavior issues. When asked why she targeted students with absences, her response was, "I've been here since the beginning, and this was Mr. Buenos expectations and I guess that stuck to me."

Noticing her approach was short, sweet, and not compassionate at all, was something that needed to be brought to her attention and modified.

The eighth-grade teacher, Mrs. Carmen Martinez rolled with the punches. She adapted her phone calls to the parent's tone of voice. Being in eighth grade, her phone calls dealt more with students gossiping, student drama, high school credit information, and testing. As she addressed the parents on certain matters, her connection with some parents was immediately evident, and others took a while to be noticed. Her buy in was always, "for the better of your child, this is what's best to talk to them about."



Reflecting on these observations, the comparison between grade levels was as expected. Lower grade levels dealt with bad behavior, maturity level, and missing assignments as these students come from a self-contained elementary environment to a bigger learning environment. The participants played a huge role in this research as to why the parental involvement program needs to be revised and modified for all stakeholders.

Many other phone calls lead to parents stating they worked extended hours in order to provide for the family and their needs. Some parents and or educators suggested that they are in the technology era and that they should be able to produce communication with each other using technology. Some stakeholders mentioned that in the elementary setting, they used the *Remind* app and wondered why in secondary education, that option wasn't available. As a working parent myself, I communicate frequently with my sons' teachers through *Remind* app and can keep up with their progress as the number of hours I work limits my time to be available for parent-teacher conferences. With a correct technology implementation plan, parents can have access to grades, news, curriculum, and constant communication with their children's teachers. Also, online gradebooks give parents and students 24-hour access to expectations, assignments, due dates, grades, and so on, to provide opportunities for parents to communicate with their children regarding schoolwork and progress and may also prompt parents to reach out to teachers more frequently as by being continuously informed, they feel more involved in their child's education (Zieger & Tan, 2012). Furthermore, both the parental involvement and home school communication can be enhanced to support student achievement.

As we look at the expectations amongst parents and the school, both parties need to be held accountable. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (1998), most public elementary schools offer a range of opportunities for parental involvement, including open

houses (97%), parent–teacher conferences (92%), and volunteer activities (90%). These types of school activities bring awareness to all stakeholders about many of the programs that the campuses offer, and activities being held in the near future. When attending school functions, campus personnel can communicate what is needed from parents and vice versa. Also, as we look at having these phone calls or in-person meetings, we need to make sure that either the phone calls or meetings are well-planned. The parent-teacher meeting can also become a more effective interchange when parents feel invited and encouraged to attend, when conferences are well-planned, and when teachers have identified the main points to be discussed with samples of the child’s work at hand (Stevens & Tollafield, 2003).

### **Summary of Findings**

As educators, it is important that we understand that the expectations from parents will fluctuate from grade levels, and also give a comparison of how students and parents from sixth-grade tend to still be part of the campus as they still have the elementary mentality and shelter their children a little more compared to the upper grades. In eighth-grade, parental involvement tends to decrease as the students and parents feel that students should be more independent and mature, while on the contrary, this should be as equally as important as in the lower grades. It is time that stakeholders begin to talk about postsecondary, high school credits, dual enrollment and or a collegiate high school.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the factors that influenced the parental involvement program in student academic success and engagement. The results in Chapter IV represented the comments stated by the participants who were chosen and agreed to have semi-structured interviews, observed when making phone calls, and provided parent contact logs. After all interviews were done, coding and transcribing was completed and provided

similar themes: successful communication between home and school, technology implementation, and expectations given to both parents and school. With the information provided, common barriers were identified and used to find solutions and recommendations for improvement for all stakeholders.

Similar findings were also provided in research done by Epstein's (2018) six essential components of the school-family-community partnerships that enhanced parental involvement (i.e., parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community.) These themes and recommendations were also aligned with Epstein's six essential components of school-family-community partnerships, in order to move the parental involvement program at Sunview Middle School, this research done by Epstein will be used as a guide.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

This qualitative study was used to examine the factors that influenced the parental involvement program in student academic success and engagement at Sunview Middle School. The participants from Sunview Middle School were a parental involvement secretary (PIA), supervising administrator, and one teacher from each of the grade levels on campus (sixth-eighth grade). The data collected from the teachers, parental involvement assistant (PIA), and supervising administrator of the parental involvement program gave firsthand information that pointed out the obstacles and problems and gave a view through a different lens to be able to move forward and utilize this program with better guidance and implementation. The results assisted with helping the program move forward at Sunview Middle School as some modifications were already implemented and resulted from positive feedback from the stakeholders. Guided by four research questions, the interviewee responses gave the stakeholders a sense of belonging and understanding as this information is critical to all stakeholders and guidance to all students, especially in the critical years at Sunview Middle School.

The recommendations for Sunview Middle School to move forward with the parental involvement program were written in detail to communicate to as many parents as possible using the technology and district-approved applications, so there can be constant updating of the school website, as well as messages sent out via Parentlink to parents, providing constant motivation and monitoring amongst all grade levels.

When having school functions, it was determined that there must be follow-through in the communication to give parents time to voice their opinions and provide constructive feedback to the parental involvement program as the goal is to always keep improving it. In such a short amount of time that these small modifications were made, the success of participation, communication, and parent feedback has increased.

### **Discussion of the Research Questions**

Research Question 1: “What are obstacles that impede parental involvement in student academic life?” All the educators interviewed for this study expressed similar responses to why many of the parents and/or guardians were not involved in their children’s education. As mentioned prior, in the area that Sunview Middle School serves, there are a low socioeconomic group of stakeholders, which results in parents working long hours to provide for their families, parents not having transportation, parents not knowing the language, or not being legal citizens in the United States. A salient contextual marker of Latino parents is the stress they face; some stressors include poverty and low levels of education (Graham-Clay, 2005). Low socioeconomic status has been associated with developmental risks, and the author of the family stress model posits that the reason for this association is that financial strain disrupts parenting (Griffin & Galassi, 2010). In this case, parental stress might limit parent academic involvement, which might be explained by family dysfunction. This data mirrored the responses given by the participants during their interviews and observations.

Over the course of the observations and interviews, the researcher attempted to get a sense of the participants’ true feelings. Sunview Middle School educators felt the need and made it obvious during their interviews. Mrs. Carmen Martinez mentioned:

I think parental involvement needs to increase! I know life gets in the way a lot of the time, but their children come first, and I think that with the lack of support, especially with the demographics in which we serve, a lot of the parents don't see education as number one. A lot of them work a high number of hours, so they don't quite support their child when it comes to their classwork to attendance or students participating in something after school.

Most of the time, the lack of parent support leads the kids to feel like they don't have support and end up going the wrong way, rather than focusing on something better for themselves.

The responses given by the educators at different levels were similar, and it was evident that frustration and similar problems were present. Unfortunately, some of the students at Sunview Middle School do not have a mother or father figure in their lives, so their grandparents are the guardians. Mrs. Angelica Chavez mentioned:

Sometimes a lot of the guardians are much older parents or grandparents, so they don't understand how to reach out to us. Some of them are still uneducated or because they're coming from Mexico, so they don't know what the rules are or fear voicing their concerns due to deportation, not knowing that we don't have anything to do with that. These parents might feel a little bit intimidated when you try to reach out for them because it depends on the situation. I always feel like if I am calling for absences or discipline, it's a 50/50, you don't know how they're going to react, but then I guess once you start explaining to them the situation, we're just reaching out to them to assist, then they calm down. Some are excited that you do communicate with them, because they want to be involved in their kids' education, but it's the fear that we don't always know

how parents nowadays are going to react. I would paraphrase this, so you don't have two blocked quotes on the same page.

Participants also mentioned that once they explained possible new ways of communicating such as through technology, applications, and other easier ways of communicating without having to interrupt their work hours, parents were relieved; their tone of voice became calmer. Parents also expressed they were glad that help was on the way to assist them, and they understood that the district or campus needed to give directives in the platforms of communication. These recommendations came in from the new administration on campus and provided that campus personnel obtain more parental input and provide after school sessions to teach parents district-approved technological applications to ensure that parents knew how to navigate and use them wisely. Integrating technology can help educators communicate quickly to a broad parent community (Ramirez, 2001). Parents expressed that guidance was needed once the applications were set as to how they were supposed to properly access them. Online gradebooks that give parents and students 24-hour access to expectations, assignments, due dates, grades, and so on, provide opportunities for parents to communicate with their children regarding schoolwork and progress and may also prompt parents to reach out to teachers more frequently because constant communication helps them feel more informed, resulting in the idea that they feel more involved in their child's education (Patrikakou, 2016). In this way, parent involvement at home and home-school communication can be enhanced to better support student schoolwork and achievement. The parental involvement assistant (PIA) and supervising administrator did state that although it was a hard topic to hear, many parents were limited by the fear of being their illegal status. Once that was explained, parents assured educators that they would be more involved in their children's education.

Research Question 2: “What social factors influence parental involvement in student school life?” As we look at the school activities and functions that make up the educational system, it is important that parents and students are able to understand the importance of them. When talking about a campus, the first thing that comes to mind is the academics but sometimes the support that extracurricular activities have on student academic achievement is not thought of. Connecting the literature review and the section on strategies to engage parents with school extracurricular activities and other school activities and functions was successful in promoting school involvement. The educators who were interviewed agreed that having students involved in afterschool activities benefited students in the long run due to the accountability of having good academic success to participate in the afterschool activities. Educators stated they had seen more parent involvement and support when their children were involved in afterschool activities. While not all students require academic assistance, schools also offered extracurricular activities such as fine arts (band, art, orchestra, drama, and choir), athletic sports, cheerleading, drill team, and University Interscholastic League (UIL) competitions. Parents who attended after-school activities were also inclined to attend open house, meet the teacher night, and other activities that benefited student academics. Mrs. Maria Delgado states:

So far, you have a variety of parents and I understand there’s working parents out there, and they may not be so involved, but I feel that most parents want the best for their children; they want them to be better than them, so I know growing up in that situation, my parents always pushed for a good education. Parents who were involved were parents who had children in extracurricular activities and had to pass in order for the coach to play their son/daughter. My “troubled” students are the ones in athletics, so guess whose



parents are there all the time: those parents because they know they need to have good behavior, grades so they want to make sure students stay out of trouble.

Activities like those mentioned above provide a way for students to release stress and find inner peace to continue a rough day or week. The ability to be involved in the activities also allowed for some academic lead way because in order to be involved, all students should have good attendance, passing grades, and no discipline referrals. If at any point students fail to meet those requirements, students are placed on probation and may be asked to step down from their positions; therefore, students tend to go beyond the academic expectations to participate in the extracurricular activities. Jeynes (2011) wrote that extracurricular participation resulted in higher self-esteem and school bonding. Not only do students demonstrate a benefit from participation in activities, but the school may experience rewards that result from the atmosphere created by motivated students.

Although sometimes teachers feel that students don't like to stay for afterschool tutorials, they have the coaches' and parents' support for them to stay because of the "no pass, no play" rule coaches talk to students about. Mrs. Maria Delgado mentioned:

It's [no pass, no play] been very effective, because if I have for instance, a child that's missing assignment or is behind on any assignment, the fact that they are obligated to pass in order to participate, helps me to not worry much about that student. I also have some type of communication with the parent due to the after-school activities, it helps and gets both the student and parent involved, and a parent involved is always good.

Mrs. Delgado communicated that if it wasn't for the extracurricular participations of the students, some parents may not answer her phone calls, but she stated she needed to "cash in" on the fact that parents and students are more involved in school life.

Research Question 3: “How can all stakeholders collaborate to enhance parental involvement and promote student academic success?” Looking back at all the phone calls and interviewee statements, both parties can agree that having a supportive network between parents and the school system is the best way to enhance the partnership and improve the parental involvement program. Parents usually communicate with other parents, and when they hear the positive impact parents are making in the program, more parents would and may want to get involved to voice opinions and suggestions for the better of the campus and student academic success. There are daily opportunities for parents to volunteer at the campus or volunteer to become chaperones to help improve campus initiatives, and they can sign-up via an app. Having daily collaborative meetings with our parents to share the vision and goals and the direction the campus is heading, creates a sense of belonging and ownership with parents. Collaborative meetings may provide teacher expectations and support to the stakeholders as both will be aware of what is expected from the students. A student who knows that the teacher communicates on a regular basis with his/her parent and knows that his/her parent trusts the teacher will likely put more effort into school (Domina, 2005).

Putting more effort into schoolwork, being more hard-working and attentive to school subjects implies more concentration on the lesson and less disruptive behavior in the classroom that undoubtedly negatively affects the teaching process. Typically, a student behaves a certain way at home but may behave totally different at school. Mrs. Veronica Rodriguez mentioned:

Sometimes it’s a little bit of both. I think sometimes they’re apprehensive and sometimes they’re very grateful for the phone call. Sometimes parents are in shock, “like wait a minute, what did my kid do wrong?” and thank us for letting them know what’s going on because they have no idea their children behave a certain way at school. Working

together, we can always make sure that we advocate for what's best for the student. Our parents want to come through and do what they can for their kids because most parents I think, especially in our demographics for this area, they didn't have the opportunity, or weren't afforded a lot of opportunities, so they want their children to have those opportunities, and they want their kids to take advantage of them and be successful.

As educators we look at the big picture and look for any possibility to increase the support from home and motivation to our students. As Mrs. Carmen Martinez mentioned:

I think the students' self-esteem and motivation would increase tremendously just because they'll know that they have the parents' support; they have the love and the care and the appreciation of what it is that they're doing in school. So, I think that their students would respond better academically and even socially with their friends and then having that expectation from the parent would help with the responsibility aspect.

Research Question 4: "How has Sunview Middle School failed to communicate with stakeholders?" The interviewees all expressed the lack of communication that the campus or district has with stakeholders when it comes to the parental involvement program. They stated it was like air, "we know it's there but can't see it." Technology is a great way to promote communication amongst all stakeholders. School websites are a great way to showcase the great resources that the program can offer parents both in English and Spanish. Parents report a serious lack of communication from schools, and the families themselves contact the schools infrequently, so it seems that few middle schools have comprehensive programs for parental involvement, and few parents volunteer at school (Epstein & Lee, 1995). Overall, the barriers that most often confront English Language Learner (ELL) parents regarding engagement with schools include the following: (1) school-based barriers; (2) lack of English language

proficiency; (3) parental educational level; (4) disconnect between school culture and home culture; and (5) logistical issues. Further, not being able to communicate in the family's native language was also expressed as some educators are not bilingual and are no help when parents express concerns.

On a secondary campus, there are many programs happening, and it is easy to forget to do a task, which unfortunately, affects the students in a negative way. Mrs. Carmen Martinez mentioned:

I have had phone conferences, not so much in person just yet, I might have not used the visiting teacher as formatting communication however I am tempted to ask a visiting teacher or maybe even the parental involvement assistant to help reach some of these parents because of the lack of communication. I know that as a teacher, supporting our principal with the new parental involvement goals, I also have to own up and say that I have failed some of my parents with not seeking other methods.

Communication is key to many of the programs at a secondary campus that is twice as large and has twice as many students and programs compared to an elementary; it is easy to forget to talk to stakeholders; nevertheless, it is still the educator's responsibility to make it happen. As the parental involvement assistant, Mrs. Angelica Chavez mentions that school communication is hard sometimes; parents have trouble communicating with us due to work, due not being able to find a ride to come to school, and some of them don't have phones or may be disconnected or administrators are occupied and they can't call back, so there's a lot of issues when it comes to communicating with our parents.

### **How this Study Impacts Sunview Middle School**

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers, administrators, and other educators' perspectives on the impact of parental involvement and academic success. The goal of this study was to explore and describe educator perceptions regarding parental involvement and encourage stakeholders to be more engaged and assist children to improve student engagement and success. The data collected from the teachers, the parental involvement assistant (PIA), and the supervising administrator of the parental involvement program gave firsthand information that pointed out the obstacles, problems, while also giving a view through a different lens to be able to move forward and utilize this program with better guidance and implementation. This study was guided by four research questions to provide accurate information. Throughout the study, interviewees were able to provide information that was coded, transcribed, and examined carefully, which resulted in the outcome of the themes in this study. The responses given by the interviewees may give all stakeholders a sense of belonging and understanding as this information is critical to all stakeholders and guidance to all students, especially in the critical years of middle school.

Critical and valuable information was gathered and reinforced the importance of parent and/or guardian involvement in student academic success. Middle school level is valuable as students are transitioning from elementary-dependent students to young independent adults. It is critical that educators and parents be able to work together to build a strong relationship, keeping in mind that the end goal is student academic success. Although many barriers still exist and continue to arise, it is the responsibility of both to find a solution to assist the students. In education, it is the responsibility of the administration team to provide resources to educators and guidance to parents and communicate the importance of working together. Awareness and

knowledge from this study will assist parents and educators in being proactive with the parental involvement component. Although this study has stated some of the obstacles that impeded collaboration in the parental involvement program needed to succeed and improve student academic success, the data collection assists with future recommendations to be explored. Future researchers who are interested in this similar topic can expand on the following:

- Expand the study in the Latino demographics and socioeconomic status. This study was limited due to the low socio-economic area and demographics. Socio-economic status may not reflect participation of all Latinos stakeholders.
- Select a questionnaire that involves parents and their knowledge in the parental involvement program.
- Conduct the same study, but interview all staff involved with parents in an effort to compare additional data.
- Include parents and children in this study in comparison with educator responses.
- Expand the study in the same region but in different levels of income and compare stakeholder's support.

Most importantly, this study has already positively impacted the students and families at Sunview. Parents have expressed that since becoming the new principal, a lot of new initiatives have been put into place to improve the communication between the campus and the community. Parents were an important part during my recommendations given to my staff as we moved forward with the parental involvement program at Sunview Middle School. Effective dialogue develops out of a growing trust, a mutuality of concern, and an appreciation of contrasting perspectives (Massucco, 2020). Stakeholders have happily mentioned they can plan for any campus activity and request time off from work to motivate their children. As an educator and

parent, I make those changes to try and accommodate as many parents as possible. Using social media to the benefits of Sunview Middle School, monthly theme calendars are posted on the official social media page, in addition, they are also sent through a parent link to each parent who is registered on *Skyward* where they receive an invitation to attend activities happening at Sunview Middle School. The ample time given to parents has increased the collaboration of both parties. Community events were created and planned for the first time ever at Sunview Middle School to have parents come and observe the work and effort their children put in on their campus. Different activities were planned to inform parents of the curriculum and activities that were aligned with their students' education and extra support given to them to target support for state assessments or extra instructional support. Educators and parents had an opportunity to create "make and takes," so parents also know some of the rigor that goes into student projects or daily activities. Students who are involved in after- school activities: UIL, fine arts, or athletics were able to perform, present, and showcase their hard work. The outcome of several new campus activities has seen an incredible number of parents attending and showing gratitude that finally, their voices are being heard. To continue the academic success of every student and stakeholder involved, yearly recommendations will be made to better serve the demographics of students and support parents.

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## APPENDIX A

## APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Attached are the transcripts from the one-to-one semi structured staff interviews. Two rounds of 45 min to an hour or more were held to better understand the needs. The themes were identified by looking at the circled words and needs expressed by Sunview Middle School personnel. Key words, repeated concerns and themes were created with the following transcripts.

SCI  
P1A

Question number one how long have you been an educator

10 years you help out being the parental involvement.

How do you reach parents guardians in the education system?

most of the time I feel like I'm like a private investigator because you look for all the numbers in skyward and then you go back to the other siblings that from different campuses you'll see the numbers are different to the ones that you have now. At the end of if we cannot have any communication through the phone then we do a home visit to communicate with the parents

so home visits, letters, phone calls

yes

how do you feel parents or guardians feel in teachers/staff reaching out?

low

Sometimes the parents might feel a little bit intimidated when you try to reach out for them because it depends on the situation. I always feel like if it's like say for absences or disciplinary you don't know how they're going to react, but then I guess once you start explaining to them the situation, we're just reaching out to them you know. Some are excited that you do communicate with them because they want to be involved in their kids and there's not a lot of educators that really do that because of the fact that we don't always parents nowadays how they're going to react.

welcome

communication

so some do get in a defensive way and others aren't thankful

yes

Describe what parents communicate to you in why they are not involved in their children academics.

Most of the time to the parent is reaching out to me it's either because I know sometimes the admin they're busy they can't get hold of them we might slip up not the message might have not gone through I feel like they feel like they're not getting paid attention so that's part of the problem sometimes they do to gratitude is for being good to them or you know just being there to fulfill them or being there for the students.

a lot times these parents are not educated so they work different kind of jobs that we do they're not revolve in front of their kids

knowledge

long hours the type of job they have not knowing how the system works

knowledge

NO knowledge

yes because a lot of the guardians like the guardians are all of them are much older the elders are their grandparents their you know a lot of them don't understand how to reach out to us because they don't know how to get the phone or you know sometimes it goes to the voice message so a lot of those parents have to be at the much older when they're their grandparents their party regular parents some of them are still uneducated or because they're coming from Mexico so they don't know what the rules are and how we play

During a parent/guardian phone call /conference how do parents react?

KH1

1. How long have you been an educator?

I've been in education for 24 years and all have been as a teacher yes I'll have been as a teacher 20 years in elementary and for in within the secondary

2. How do you reach parents/guardians in your classroom?

Mostly would be through phone for it in the elementary level sometimes you would get a parents that actually come to the school and we would do a one to one conference so be it in secondary

now it's mainly through phone tech

3. How do you feel parents/guardians feel in teachers/staff reaching out?

Um depending on where I've been in in my future and stuff people heading about more of the low social economic area I have noticed that parents right away when the teacher calls they'll say what did they do wrong you know but if I was teaching in a different area which I've also taught in the higher do you know the higher educated parents it was always a welcoming call as well so it was a welcoming call but one of the things to hear parents say oh you're calling because of social and what did they do they always think of it as a negative but sometimes i make calls just for a progressive yeah

4. Describe what parents communicate to you in why they are not involved in their children academics.

Most of them are single parents or they work and their job requires them to work later hours of the day or can't be as involved as as other parents  
No involvement long hours

5. During a parent/guardian phone call /conference how do parents react?

Need to react either depending on what I'm calling for if I'm calling to give a positive or even if not positive I always try to come out with a positive thing and then let them know OK well this is



AK1

1. How long have you been an educator?

This is my 12th all in secondary

2. How do you reach parents/guardians in your classroom?

I've tried different ways I've tried apps like remind I've also tried using the visiting teacher and a little bit of the parental involvement

3. How do you feel parents/guardians feel in teachers/staff reaching out?

sometimes it's a little bit of both I think sometimes they're apprehensive and sometimes they're very grateful for for the I guess the call some parents see it as like wait a minute when my kid do wrong others say hey thanks for letting me know what's going on because they have no idea

4. Describe what parents communicate to you in why they are not involved in their children academics.

And they have jobs and unfortunately some are single parents so they have to work and you have to write to get really can't afford to be as involved as they would like and their kids academic life and their parents not too sure the parents that that really are involved you you can tell the they there's a good support system *No expectations*

*No support + long work hours*

5. During a parent/guardian phone call /conference how do parents react?

they wanted help usually parents want to help usually *no support* parents want to come through and do what they can for their kid because a lot of the most parents I think especially let me see demographically for this area the didn't have opportunity the lot of opportunities they weren't afforded a lot of opportunities opportunities so they want their children to have those opportunities and they want their kids to take advantage of them

6. What do you think of the kind of parents/guardians we have? Do they provide support?

LH1

also occurring so you try to make them feel comfortable enough sometimes you know just talk to him normally like a personal experience or hi how are you this is this is this and I started talking to them and then then I kind of said OK well I have your son or your daughter my class and this is what's going on so it can at first try to make them comfortable is something negative

6. What do you think of the kind of parents/guardians we have? Do they provide support?

lack of support  
they provide as much as they can you know some parents are a lot more involved than others you see it in and it doesn't mean that there they have to be educated or anything but some most parents they value education so they try to be supportive to their children but not enough case

7. Have your views on parental support changed throughout the years? If so, how?

Yes I've been teaching for 24 years in the beginning parents were declining parental involvement a lot more involved the teacher was correct the teacher whatever the teacher says nowadays when you call I said well what are you doing you know I mean I see the difference in the parents younger generation they've grown at a different generation.

8. Is there anything else you would like to tell/ask me?

SC1 P1A

I've never been in a conference unless I have to interpretate with the teacher like i said once again a lot of these parents are either much older or some of them are from parents to come from mexico a lot of those parents don't understand what's going on sometimes they'd rather not even have a conflict they'd rather be person to person so they know with like you know their goal to feel comfortable to talk

knowledge

What do you think of the kind of parents/guardians we have? Do they provide support?

Right now we have maybe I would say like two different kind of parents you have the parents that are the ones that did they have they're not involved you have the parents some parents that I involved all the time that the students would be athletic you know the support and you know the current involvements if they want to be here so there's two different kind of parents that we have here on our

No involvement

Support

do they provide support

most of them do most of them do they do even if the ones that are that work late or don't aren't like we try to communicate with them but then we reach them out on a daily day half off you know center apologize for not being involved that they wish they would have been involved more often

No involvement

do we have parents that provide support either by phone calls coming in helping out the campus what kind of support have they offered

those parents they want to be doing like involvement or being maybe like a chaperone in certain sports or you know even support their student maybe not just their own but maybe for another students you know we do have a parent that supports a lot of other students in need and you know she may be a little bit well off we are trying to support the kids

Have your views on parental support changed throughout the years? If so, how?

Yes because I've gotten experience what I see and then not knowing how it is at the schools some that know it the elderly parents I mean there's just several different parents that are understood throughout the years that have made me I think I've been around understanding in every situation

I just think that different cases out there a lot of kids we don't know sometimes they don't know how to reach out to their parents you know the parents sometimes don't know how to explain to us to reach out to them

AA1

Parents in this area they can't because they don't know any better and a lot of parents in this area is not only do they not know any better some of them are under the impression that if they make phone calls or if they reach out they might not have proper documentations to be here legally and they might be sent back

7. Have your views on parental support changed throughout the years? If so, how?

Notes expected

NO expectations

Yes. in the past I remember being maybe the first year teacher and thinking oh these parents are going to help these parents are going to be create these parents are going to be all about you know helping get their kids in order but sometimes you get a defensive parent because kids I mean most of us know what we have parents don't always know what they have and kids can be one way at home and they completely different way at school and they act one way with their friends and they act completely different with mom and dad

8. Is there anything else you would like to tell/ask me?

think that we're on the right track I think that there there is a lot of great help as far as I'm create involvement assistant and the visiting teacher they're doing a great they help out a lot with the phone calls and it just

## APPENDIX B

## APPENDIX B

### OBSERVATION DATA

The attached are the observation fieldnotes that were created as the personnel from Sunview Middle School called to address the concerns in their academic time. Listening to the phone calls, stakeholders expressed the lack of communication, support, technology, and trainings. The phrases and keywords support the interview data provided in creating the themes for this research.

Timestamp	Grading Period	Student Name / ID	Method of Contact:	Parent/Guardian Name:	Parent/Guardian Contact Information:	Communication Status:	In reference to:	Summary of communication:
11/8/2022 22:15:23	3rd Grading Period	[Redacted]	Phone	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Answered	TELPAS tutorials	Spoke to mom regarding TELPAS tutorials this Saturday.
11/8/2022 22:16:48	3rd Grading Period	[Redacted]	Phone	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Answered	TELPAS tutorials	Called parent regarding TELPAS tutorials on Saturday.
11/8/2022 22:18:02	3rd Grading Period	[Redacted]	Phone	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	No answer	TELPAS tutorials	Parent did not answer.
11/8/2022 22:19:34	3rd Grading Period	[Redacted]	Phone	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Answered	TELPAS tutorials	Spoke to mom regarding TELPAS tutorials on Saturday.
11/9/2022 20:44:33	3rd Grading Period	[Redacted]	Phone	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Answered	TELPAS tutorials	Called parent to advise her of the TELPAS tutorial cancellation.
11/9/2022 20:45:39	3rd Grading Period	[Redacted]	Phone	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Answered	TELPAS tutorials	Called parent to advise her of the TELPAS tutorial cancellation.
11/9/2022 20:46:34	3rd Grading Period	[Redacted]	Phone	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	No answer, Left a messa	TELPAS tutorials	Called parent to advise her of the TELPAS tutorial cancellation.
11/9/2022 20:48:13	3rd Grading Period	[Redacted]	Phone	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	No answer, Left a messa	TELPAS tutorials	Called grandma to advise her of the TELPAS tutorial cancellation.
11/9/2022 20:49:13	3rd Grading Period	[Redacted]	Phone	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Answered	TELPAS tutorials	Called parent to advise her of the TELPAS tutorial cancellation.
11/9/2022 20:50:26	3rd Grading Period	[Redacted]	Phone	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Answered	TELPAS tutorials	Called parent to advise her of the TELPAS tutorial cancellation.
11/9/2022 20:51:30	3rd Grading Period	[Redacted]	Phone	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	No answer, Left a messa	TELPAS tutorials	Called parent to advise of the TELPAS tutorial cancellation.
11/16/2022 14:12:50	3rd Grading Period	[Redacted]	Phone	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	No answer	Behavior	Called to speak to parent about behavior and refusing to complete his work in class.
11/18/2022 21:11:22	3rd Grading Period	[Redacted]	Email	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Unswered, Left a messag	New Enrichment schedule.	[Redacted] emailed me regarding New Enrichment. We briefly emailed one another back and forth regarding the reason for the change. However, it was decided that we leave [Redacted] with his Math teacher. [Redacted] asked if I could call [Redacted] tomorrow regarding [Redacted] accommodations and [Redacted] Reading Benchmark I score.

technology? Not in place - no expectations on hours of work.

applicator to find to call -

Timestamp	Grading Period	Student Name / ID	Method of Contact:	Parent/Guardian Name:	Parent/Guardian Contact Information:	Communication Status:	In reference to:	Summary of communication:
11/18/2022 21:18:30	3rd Grading Period	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	answered	[Redacted]	[Redacted] and I spoke about [Redacted]. She explained about [Redacted] and the way that [Redacted] uses [Redacted] classroom performance, benchmark scores, [Redacted]

any hours? any technology to serve us parents?  
How can I track the grades?

Timestamp	Grading Period	Student Name / ID	Method of Contact:	Parent/Guardian Name:	Parent/Guardian Contact Information:	Communication Status:	In reference to:	Summary of communication:
							- emailed sent - training for applications?	I called the parent to speak to her about classroom behavior and current grades. I called the only number on file, but was unable to get ahold of mom. The phone number I called and voicemail [redacted] I did see an email to Skyward, so I emailed her as well.
10/13/2022 23:01:01	2nd Grading Period		Phone			No answer	(constant misbehavior (no expectations)	
10/25/2022 17:11:41	2nd Grading Period		Phone			No answer		No Answer.
10/25/2022 17:14:28	2nd Grading Period		Email			om Answered		Discussed [redacted] current average and AR.
10/25/2022 17:21:01	2nd Grading Period		Phone			Answered		Discussed [redacted] classroom behavior and class grades. Mom had called the school to schedule a phone conference with me. Mom and I spoke in regards to [redacted] attention/focus, medication, current academic reading struggles, and classroom accommodations for his 504 plan.
11/2/2022 14:59:39	2nd Grading Period		Phone			Answered	Academic success? expectations? lack of knowledge on her [redacted] the program checklist.	Spoke to mom regarding TELPAS tutorials this Saturday.
11/8/2022 21:25:16	3rd Grading Period		Phone			Answered		The phone number is not in service.
11/8/2022 21:35:44	3rd Grading Period		Phone			No answer, Disconnected	applications to find more sites and make parents aware.	Spoke to [redacted] father regarding TELPAS tutorials this Saturday.
11/8/2022 21:44:50	3rd Grading Period		Phone			Answered		Spoke to mom regarding TELPAS tutorials this Saturday.
11/8/2022 22:00:04	3rd Grading Period		Phone			Answered		Spoke to mom regarding TELPAS tutorials this Saturday.
11/8/2022 22:06:32	3rd Grading Period		Phone			No answer, Left a message		Mom's number did not work. Spoke to grandma and provided her with the TELPAS message regarding Saturday tutorials.
11/8/2022 22:10:51	3rd Grading Period		Phone			No answer		Parent did not answer.
11/8/2022 22:12:09	3rd Grading Period		Phone			No answer		Parent did not answer.
11/8/2022 22:13:53	3rd Grading Period		Phone			No answer, Disconnected		Phone is not accepting calls.

Timestamp	Grading Period	Student Name / ID	Method of Contact:	Parent/Guardian Name:	Parent/Guardian Contact Information:	Communication Status:	In reference to:	Summary of communication:
9/16/2022	1st Grading Period		Email			Answered	Parent is always busy and working late hours. Not prepared for class. No expectations from both. - need more training application to communicate better.	Parent and I discussed [redacted] current grade expectations, behavior comments, SEL lessons, and L library availability. Sent all parents a Remind message [redacted] asking them that their child would be taking their 1st Six Weeks exam the following day. A reminder for parents to tell their children to charge their Chromebooks and to get a good night's rest. Dear parents and students, AR is up and running!! Students need 5.0 AR points by September 22nd, 2022. The following Six Weeks period will require a minimum of 10.0 AR points. Please make sure your child is reading at least 20 minutes daily! Students will only be allowed to AR test in their RELA class or the Library. Thank you for helping your child meet this goal. If you have any questions, please feel free to email me at: [redacted]
9/19/2022	1st Grading Period	All Parents	Remind	All Parents	Provided on Skyward	Left a message	2 programs in place?	
9/8/2022	1st Grading Period	All Students & Parents	Skyward		Provided on Skyward	Provided on Skyward	Left a message	AR points & Reading requirements [redacted]
10/4/2022 15:36:18	2nd Grading Period		Email			Answered	consistent misbehavior - work hours - App to communicate?	Discussed [redacted] attitude in participation, in-class assignments, and homework. Parent did not answer. Left voicemail regarding the missing library books.
10/4/2022 15:41:11	2nd Grading Period		Phone			No answer		Student is missing 7 library books that need to get turned in.
10/4/2022 16:05:51	2nd Grading Period		Phone			No answer	no answer technology App to engage and let 10 parents aware	Student needs to turn in 4 Library books that belong [redacted] Exam. Parent did not answer.



## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jaime Serna was born in General Bravo, Nuevo Leon. After completing high school at Edinburg North High School in 2005, Jaime entered The University of Texas Pan- American where he received a Bachelor of Arts in 2010; he received a Master of Education in 2016 at The University of Rio Grande Valley. In the Summer of 2020, he began his doctoral studies at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Jaime Serna earned his Doctor of Education from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in May 2023. He is currently a middle school campus principal and resides in Edinburg, Texas, with his beautiful family. He can be contacted at 3026 N. Jackson Rd., Edinburg, Texas, 78541.