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# Exploring the Perceptions of Teachers and Principals on Parent Involvement in County Community School Students' Academic Achievement

Sandra Luz Hernandez-Monreal
*Brandman University*, smonreal68@gmail.com

# Exploring the Perceptions of Teachers and Principals on Parent Involvement in County Community School Students' Academic Achievement

A Dissertation by

Sandra Luz Hernandez

Brandman University

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Committee in charge:

Patrick Ainsworth, Ed.D. Committee Chair

Keith Larick, Ed.D. Committee Member

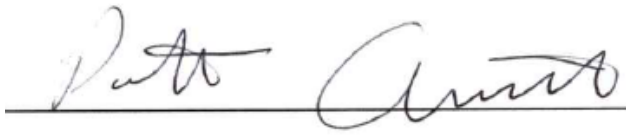
Martinrex Kedziora, Ed.D. Committee Member

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY

Chapman University System

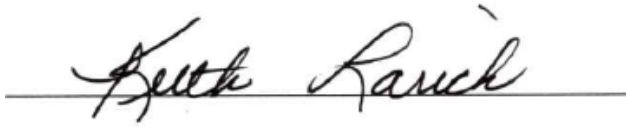
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

The dissertation of Sandra Luz Hernandez is approved.



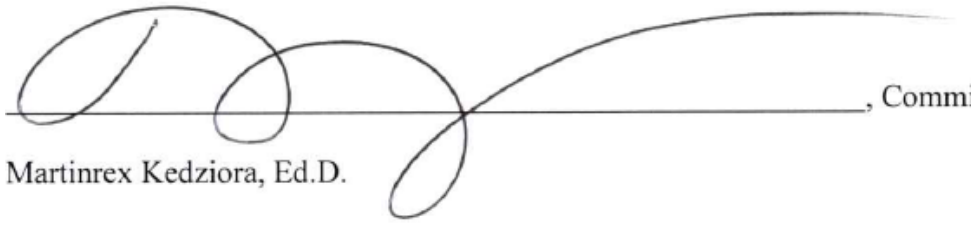
, Dissertation Chair

Patrick Ainsworth, Ed.D.



, Committee Member

Dr. Keith Larick, Ed.D.



, Committee Member

Martinrex Kedziora, Ed.D.

, Associate Dean

Patricia Clark-White Ed.D.

March 2019

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ABSTRACT

Exploring the Perceptions of Teachers and Principals on Parent Involvement in County Community School Students' Academic Achievement

by Sandra Luz Hernandez

**Purpose:** The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand and explain how teachers and principals perceive how parent engagement affects high school academic achievement within county operated community schools in Riverside County California. An additional purpose of the study was to understand and explain actions that teachers and principals believe are necessary to increase parent engagement within county operated community schools in Riverside County.

**Methodology:** This qualitative phenomenological study explored the perspectives of 13 teachers and seven principals in county community schools on parent engagement and the actions necessary to involve parents in their children's education. The researcher in conjunction with a thematic dissertation partner created an in depth semi-structured interview consisting of eight interview questions that emerged from the literature review.

**Findings:** This study found that parent involvement in the county community schools is important to the success of students. Parent disinterest and their lack of knowledge keeps parents from supporting their children's education. Further, the lack of communication creates an unwelcoming environment, and the frequency of parent involvement affects student motivation to stay engaged in school.

**Conclusions:** Student academic performance is minimized when parents show minimal interest in their children's education, and parent involvement is lower when parents are not educated on the purpose of alternative education. Additionally, when parents face

transportation, time, and language barriers their involvement in school events is diminished.

**Recommendations:** Creating activities, events, or programs that encourage parent involvement, and building a collaborative line of communication helps to increase student academic performance. Parents need help to overcome obstacles that hinder their involvement in the schools. In addition, the schools need to promote all activities and make sure to send reminders to ensure parent attendance. Lastly, the schools can offer a sequence of trainings for parents that educates them on their rights and responsibilities specific to alternative education, and basic skills classes' necessary for parents to be able to support their children's education.

# PREFACE

Following various discussions and considerations regarding parent engagement, two doctoral students discovered that they shared a common interest. Their interest was to explore the perceptions of parent engagement not only from a school staff perspective, but also from a parent perspective. This resulted in a thematic study conducted by a research team of two doctoral students. A qualitative phenomenological study was designed with a focus to understand and explain the perception of parent engagement as lived experiences of teacher, principals, and parents as a means to increase student academic achievement. Parents, teachers, and principals were selected from Riverside County Community Schools to obtain data on their perception on parent engagement. Each student focused on interviewing a group of individuals. One doctoral student interviewed 16 parents, and the other doctoral student selected 20 staff members, seven principals and 13 teachers.

Each researcher conducted interviews to determine what perceptions they had on parent engagement. The interviews, lived experiences, and perceptions helped them to make meaning. The researcher included four demographic questions to provide the researcher context of who the interviewee was and provide them with additional information. To ensure thematic consistency, the team co-created the purpose statement, research questions, definitions, interview questions, and study procedures. Throughout the study, the term "dissertation partner" is used to refer to the researchers who conducted this thematic study.

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# CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

After being expelled from a comprehensive high school for continuous fighting, drug use, and gang affiliation, Alberto (a fictitious name used to protect the student's privacy) was court ordered to seek an alternative education school. At the time of his expulsion Alberto was in the ninth grade and faced many academic challenges. He insisted that his success would come through the sale of drugs, and he did not need an education. However, after continuous meetings with school staff and his mother, counseling sessions for misbehaviors and academic failure, Alberto opted to make a change in his life. Inclusively, he was tired of being picked up by law enforcement for gang involvement and disruptive behaviors to the community. Then, after four years at the same community school, he still found himself credit deficient. Nonetheless, in the 2014-15 school year Alberto successfully earned his high school diploma. At the age of 22, Alberto continues to visit the same school he graduated from, and enjoys sharing his successful life stories with currently enrolled students.

The emergence of alternative education in North America began in the mid-1950s (Quinn, Pairir, Faller, Gable & Tonelson, 2006; Tissington, 2006; Turton, Umbreit & Mathur, 2011) as an alternative way to provide educational services to students that were failing academically. During that time, John Dewey, an American philosopher and educator was recognized as the father of experiential education (Reimer & Cash, 2003). Dewey believed students needed to learn through individualized and experiential education, since not all students have the same learning styles. His philosophy helped to inspire the opening of many alternative education schools. M. A. Raywid (1994) states that by 1981, approximately three million students were being educated in alternative

education schools. Nonetheless, alternative education was not considered a new educational approach, due to alternative educational systems having been in existence since early American colonial times. The affluent and religious groups taught their children in diverse styles that were not considered alternative education (Reimer & Cash, 2003).

For approximately 60 years, alternative education has become the last educational resort to many at-risk students (Porowski, O'Conner, & Luo, 2014). At-risk students are those that have academic, social, and/or emotional complications within the general population environment. As identified by Ricard, Lerma, and Heard (2013) at-risk students are those who "have violated the code of conduct at their home schools" (p. 285). Pharo (2012) found that in 2010, nationwide, 7.4% of students dropped out of traditional high school for a variety of reasons and that states across the nation began to do something about this widespread problem by providing the alternative education system. The states offer students the opportunity to receive an education regardless of their situations and they have the right to earn a high school diploma in a public quality school that addresses their individual needs (Pharo, 2012).

Most of the states consider alternative education as a service to students with behavioral problems, academic instruction deficiencies, social/emotional issues, and job readiness (Porowski, O'Conner, & Luo, 2014). Yet, the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) believes that alternative schools and programs are strictly designed to address the needs of students that typically cannot be met in the comprehensive schools. Students participating in alternative schools and programs are commonly at-risk of failing, with a history of poor academic grades, absenteeism, pregnancy, or behavior problems.

Inappropriate behaviors are connected to temporary or permanent expulsion from their schools of attendance (U. S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2002), which finds them in alternative schools primarily serving students labeled "at-risk" (C. A. Lehr, Tan, & Ysseldyke, 2009).

Alternative education schools provide an environment that is suitable to the needs of many at-risk students that are not present in a traditional high school. Felix (2012) found after conducting a study in the Riverside County Community Schools that a smaller campus was conducive to student success, those students felt safer in a smaller environment, and that parent involvement is critical to student success (Felix, 2012). She indicated that the alternative education offered in the community schools allowed for stronger teacher to parent and student collaboration, thus facilitating student engagement and academic achievement. Finally, she discovered that 80% of the population studied was happier in the community school setting, and that giving students the necessary tools they were increasing academic achievement and behavior issues were decreasing.

## Background

*Education must, be not only a transmission of culture but also a provider of alternative views of the world and a strengthener of the will to explore them.*

Jerome Bruner

### Historical Perspective of Alternative Education

Alternative education in North America started in the 1950s, and brought new educational settings for students to succeed (Quinn et al., 2006; Tissington, 2006; Turton, Umbreit & Mathur, 2011). The alternative education settings for public education emerged for those students that were not able to perform at the traditional schools.

Students could attend religious schools, private schools, or had the option to be home schooled. Alternative education schools were considered an unconventional way of providing educational services to students that were failing.

**Alternative Education in American Schools**

Alternative education opportunities for students were often based on social class, culture, and gender, which was considered a racist act and gained momentum during the civil rights movement of the 1960s (Young, 1990). In the 1960s, public schools in the United States were highly criticized for the segregation of races (M. A. Raywid, 1999). Public schools viewed their mission as promoting human equality, while private schools often only served upper and middle class Caucasian students (Reimer & Cash, 2003). Finally, the end of the 1960s brought a new system of alternative education that gave students the opportunity to on-campus schooling or off campus education, but considered an alternative education program (Young, 1990).

In the United States, (43 states and the District of Columbia,) have formal definitions of alternative education; (35 states) students with behavioral issues, (21 states) regular academic instruction, (14 states) counseling, (13 states) social skills, (12 states) life skills, and (11 states) job readiness (Porowski et al., 2014). Yet, the USDOE has a different definition for alternative education. USDOE indicates that alternative education is a combination of the different components offered by different states. Alternative schools and programs that exist are meant to support the students' needs that are not being met at the traditional schools (USDOE, 2002). Inclusively, the USDOE clarifies the meaning of alternative education students. "Alternative education students are those students who are at-risk of failing, are experiencing academic problems, high

absenteeism, disruptive classroom behavior, or any related factors connected with temporary or permanent expulsions from the traditional school" (Ricard, Lerma, & Heard, 2013, p. 285). The USDOE's definition stays consistent with most recent literature that finds that alternative schools primarily serve students labeled "at-risk" (C. A. Lehr et al., 2009).

At-risk students are those who have academic, social, and/or emotional problems within the general population environment, and have in some manner violated the behavioral rules at their traditional schools (Ricard, Lerma, & Heard 2013). For approximately 60 years, alternative education has become the last educational resort to many at-risk students (Porowski et al., 2014). Additionally, the population that alternative education focuses on serving is for those students with low academic performance and with a family history of social, political, and financial hardships (M. A. Raywid, 1994).

M. A. Raywid (1994) states that alternative education has various characteristics that support needs of students. Some of the characteristics include: (a) innovation to academic instruction that includes engaging and creative instruction, the (b) size of the alternative education program are small with a low teacher to student ratio and encourage a caring environment for students, and (c) building a link to a variety of community organizations to help support student learning through real world experiences (L. Y. Aron, 2006; M. A. Raywid, 1994). The features support the needs of students who are not able to maintain enrollment at traditional schools.

## Alternative Education in California

The California Department of Education (CDE) states that school district governing boards can expel students from the traditional high schools and then students are required to seek an alternative education (California Department of Education [CDE], 2016a). According to the California Education Code (EC) 48915(a-c) school boards are legally authorized to expel students for behaviors that will endanger themselves, other students, or staff. However, the schools must provide evidence supporting the offense committed, and the students have the right to an expulsion hearing within a specified amount of time. Students must then continue their education while the appeal is in process, or when students meet the requirements for returning to their home school districts (California Education Code, 2016).

There are different types of alternative education programs designed to meet the needs of at-risk students who are unsuccessful in the traditional school settings (Miller, 1994; Mottaz, 2002). Caroleo (2014) like Pharo (2012), believe that not all regular school settings are the right environment for all students. Students that encounter problems such as academic failure, continual misbehaviors, chronic truancies, or credit deficiencies in the traditional school environment are referred to the alternative educations schools. There are important benefits to attending community schools. Students working in smaller communities can build a better rapport with teachers, peers, and the community (Caroleo, 2014; Porowski et al., 2014). This personal and individualized approach is important to alternative school student's success (Smith & Thomson, 2014).

A diversity of alternative education school settings exist, however not all of them are suitable for the at-risk population of students being referenced in this study (C. M. Lange & Sletten, 1995; M. A. Raywid 1994). Alternative education is divided into the following different categories of alternative education programs:

- Continuation schools that attend to the needs of students who drop out of the comprehensive school, and give students the opportunity to earn the high school diploma or the GED certificate (Hefner-Packer, 1991).
- Magnet schools, which use a performance or project, based curricula teaching approach that evokes higher-level cognition and social interaction learning (Magnet Schools of America, 2013).
- Community day schools, are considered the last opportunity for students to modify their behaviors before any expulsion occurs. The 360-minute minimum instructional day includes academic programs that provide challenging curriculum and individual attention to student learning modalities and abilities. Community day school programs also focus on the development of pro-social skills and student self-esteem and resiliency (J. Ruiz de Velasco, Austin et al., 2008).
- County-run community schools, which are remedial, focused on students needing academic support, and social/emotional rehabilitation. After successful treatment, rehabilitation, and completion of requirements students are readmitted to their comprehensive schools (CDE, 2016a.)
- Independent study programs, are a combination of all first three types, where students are supported through remedial courses, other school sites such as,

community schools. This type of program collaborates with community resources like counseling and probation department to help monitor behaviors and school attendance (California Continuation Schools, 2008).

- Juvenile court schools, where students are taught under the protection of the juvenile court system while being incarcerated in places such as: juvenile halls, camps, day centers, or regional youth facilities (CDE, 2016a).
- Charter schools are independently run by state and local sponsors, and are a public school of choice (Reimer, & Cash, 2003). Charter schools operate freely from some state regulations imposed on school districts. However, they are held accountable for academic results and for upholding any promises they make.
- Schools without walls, which focus on serving students needing educational and training programs. This program offers students the flexibility of individualized schedules (F. P. Schargel & Smink, 2001).
- School within a school that offer students a separate setting within the traditional school (Hefner-Packer, 1991).

Increasingly, at- risk students who exhibit behavior and academic issues, and who are often credit deficient, are choosing to attend alternative education schools to earn the credits needed to graduate. Students become so immersed in the alternative education program that they experience failure when they return to the comprehensive schools (M. A. Raywid, 1999; Reimer & Cash, 2003). The results of the research lead to the conclusion that alternative education school programs are effective in minimizing the

inappropriate school behaviors, have given students reassurance, improved academic performance, and lowered school dropout rates (R. D. Barr & Parrett, 1997).

**Alternative Education Schools in California**

Alternative education schools build partnerships with community resources to help students obtain an education (Coalition for Community Schools, 2014). These partnerships benefit the students, their families, and the community. Through collaborative work, both the community schools and the community partners help students minimize their attendance issues, build stronger work habits, and suppress the inappropriate behaviors through positive discipline practices and challenging curriculum (Garcia & Thornton, 2014).

Community day schools primarily serve students who are expelled from their traditional schools, students referred by the School Attendance Review Board (SARB), or at-risk youth with behavior and attendance issues. The purpose of the community day school program is to make sure that expelled students are provided with an education during the time of the expulsion. Community day schools are overseen by the school districts. The school district governing board is in charge of ensuring that the students are well served. This requirement was established by Legislation in 1995, and in 1998 an authorization was extended to permit county offices of education to start community day schools. According to the 2015-16 school year data, 193 community day schools served 3,669 students (CDE, 2017a).

County community schools are overseen by the county offices of education and are intended to serve students in grades K-12 who are expelled from their districts for behavior or school attendance issues. In 2010, the number of community schools was

261, and served 62,005 students who were on probation or parole, homeless, students not attending any educational institution, or at the request of a parent or guardian. Students can graduate from county community schools. Yet, the county community school's mission is to prepare the students to return to their traditional schools once students have increased their attendance, academic performance, and met the probationary requirements (CDE, 2017a).

Continuation schools offer an education to students who are 16 through 18 years of age, and are seeking to complete the courses required for graduation. Credit deficiency is the major reason why students are referred to continuation schools. However, students are required to attend the required 180 minutes of daily instruction. Students are also allowed to have a flexible schedule in case they have a job or a family to care for. Data from the 2015-16 school year states that 452 continuation schools had a total of 55,899 students enrolled (CDE, 2017a).

The latest available public shared data on community day schools, county community schools, and continuation schools was from 2016. The data shows that there are 193 active community day schools, 79 county community schools, and 452 continuation schools (CDE, 2017a). Both community day and county community schools serve students that are expelled from their traditional schools, SARB or probation referred, and absenteeism issues. However, county community schools also provide services to homeless; parolees, students not enrolled in an educational setting, and allow students to graduate from their institution. On the other hand, continuation schools serve students who are credit deficient and are seeking a high school diploma. All three types of alternative education schools team up with community resources such as, law

enforcement, probation, and health and human services agencies to provide students with the upmost educational experience. Nonetheless, only community day and county community school systems have the same requirement for number of daily instructional minutes. Community schools require students to attend school a total of 28 hours. Continuation schools also have to be located on different sites, but only require students to attend 15 hours a week (CDE, 2017a).

**Dropout Rates**

Student dropouts have occurred for a variety of reasons and continue to be a concern in the United States (Pharo, 2012). Students are leaving their education due to lack of success and enthusiasm for learning. The typical community school student has low attendance, disruptive behaviors, and presents little or no effort early on in their educational years (Barrington & Hendricks, 1989; Cairns, Cairns, & Neckerman, 1989). Additionally, research shows that students that dropout of school will end up on the streets and risk getting involved in drug use, gang affiliation, or have babies at a very young age (Barrington & Hendricks, 1989; Cairns et al., 1989). The fear of this happening has awoken the concern of educators, politicians, and the public has increased the interest and need for alternative education schools (Paglin & Fager, 1997). Given high dropout rates, most of the states have created different paths within the alternative education programs for student to follow, and that will support student engagement and earning of a high school diploma.

In the 2015-16 school year, the CDE (2017a) stated that 9.8% of the student population cohort dropped out of school. Statewide 48,118 students dropped out of the 489,036-original student cohort. However, the state graduation rates have continued to

increase consecutively in the previous six years. In 2016, 82.3% of students graduated, and have continued to increase since the 2010 school year.

While the increase is viewed as positive, nearly 50,000 students are dropping out of schools annually and lack the skills necessary to maintain an economically stable life (CDE, 2017). Many employers see the high school diploma as the minimum qualification for employment. Dropouts are more likely to be on public assistance, homeless, affiliated with gangs, or incarcerated (Sum, Khatiwada, McLaughlin, & Palm, 2009).

Based on the data from the CDE, students in community schools are there for a diversity of reasons. The goal of the community schools is to support the students in collaboration with the community resources to help them return to their traditional schools to graduate (CDE, 2017a). Currently, no data exists as to the specific number of community school students graduating in California.

**Importance of Parent Engagement**

Parental involvement in alternative education contributes to student success, and when combined with a school partnership it helps to foster student academic achievement and behavior improvement (K. V. Hoover-Dempsey, Battiato et al., 2001). Building collaboration between students, parents, and school staff is indeed a huge contributor to student success (Feinstein & Symons, 1999). Inclusively, the more programs and methodologies surface in support of education, the more parent engagement is considered necessary (Gewertz, 2006: Carney-Hall, 2008). The Reauthorization of Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1994 stated that parental involvement in their children's

education is critical to student learning, thus making parent involvement a national priority (USDOE and the Office of Special Education, 1994).

J. S. Williams (2008), like Chavkin (1989) believe that parent engagement in children's education is necessary to support many foundations of student achievement. Parents are partners to educators, because they can help with the school activities, fundraisers, serve as liaisons to the community, and most important maintain a close communication with all school staff. Maintaining that continual communication with teachers supports student behaviors and academic performance of the student (Clark, 1993).

The extensive research on parent engagement in their children's education clearly indicates that communication between teachers and parents is the key to student success (Clark, 1993; A. Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Mapp, 2004; F. P. Schargel & Smink, 2001; Williams Bost, 2004). The parents' involvement in school functions is also related to the improved student behaviors (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Furthermore, research on parent involvement strongly indicates that when parents participate in the student's education, students are more motivated to attend school regularly, graduate from high school, and abstain from destructive behaviors (Machen, 2005; Mapp, 2004; F. P. Schargel & Smink, 2001).

Like Machen, Wilder (2014), believed that lack of parental engagement greatly affects the students' desire to continue in school. Poor school attendance, low academic performance, and inappropriate behaviors are clear indicators that students are disengaged (Edgar & Johnson, 1995). Students who lose interest in school are more inclined to drop out of school and face a more challenging future (Hair, Ling, & Cochran,

2003). Inclusively, students who do not earn a high school diploma are more likely to face unemployment, live in poverty, and have children at a young age (Hair et al., 2003). Finally, the evidence collected on maintaining parental engagement strongly supports the conclusion that parents that are involved in the student's education highly motivate the students to embrace education and continue to higher education (Clark, 1993; A. Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Mapp, 2004; F. P. Schargel & Smink, 2001; Williams Bost 2004).

**Academic Achievement in Alternative Education**

In 2002, the National Center on Educational Statistics (NCES), reported 10,900 public alternative schools and programs serving 612,000 students. These schools were operating in the United States, and included charter schools, juvenile hall, and inter-district school programs (Kleiner, Porch, & Farris, 2002). Yet, all these programs service at-risk students who are expelled from their districts for inappropriate behaviors, and low academic performance (Ricard et al., 2013).

At-risk students are students who are at-risk of experiencing educational failure for various reasons. Some of the reasons include but are not limited to inappropriate and disruptive behaviors, low academic performance, low school attendance, expulsions, pregnancies, drugs, weapon possession on school campuses (Caroleo, 2014). Foley and Pang (2006) state that at-risk students attending alternative education schools are from diverse educational backgrounds. Inclusively, students participating in alternative education schools have been identified as being members from minority groups (C. A. Lehr & Lange, 2003; Paglin & Fager, 1997; M. A. Raywid, 1994).

Often students attending alternative school programs are there because of social emotional issues or problems beginning at home. Furthermore, students suffering from school problems turn to drugs, or gang affiliation in search of a crowd that will make them feel comfort (Lickona, 1993). Consequently, students become involved in unlawful activities and police matters causing their disconnection from education. As a result, students fall behind in their schoolwork and end up in community school classrooms needing to catch up to their peers (Conrath, 2001).

In 2013, researchers found that 80% of the student population in both traditional and alternative education high schools earned a high school diploma, and the other 20% did not graduate with their cohort. The 20% of students not graduating with their cohort encountered various obstacles and had to enroll a fifth year to graduate (Balfanz, Bridgeland, Bruce, & Fox, 2013). In some cases, students who were already 18 years old had to seek an alternative education school, as did other students that were behind in their course credits needed for graduation.

In California, no longitudinal data systems are available to compare academic achievement that can be followed as students in alternative education are there for a variety of reasons; such as, academic and behavioral problems, credit deficiencies, and absenteeism. Ambiguous data will result if the comparison of alternative education and comprehensive school students was to occur (J. Ruiz de Velasco, Austin, Dixon, Johnson, McLaughlin, & Perez, 2008).

**Staff Perceptions**

Principals and teachers are the pillars of community schools, and as school leaders they are expected to create an atmosphere conducive for student learning and

parent involvement (Frost, 2012). Principals make connections with community resources, for example the probation department to help monitor student behaviors and school attendance. Principals, as well as teachers counsel students, create new curriculum to meet the needs of each particular student, and find community resources to provide a real-world learning environment for students (Glatthorn, 1975). Alternative education teachers are not only in the classroom lecturing and instructing, they also have non-instructional responsibilities to attend to that tie into the support of student learning, such as maintaining a collaborative teacher-parent communication (Barge & Loges, 2003). It takes a lot of patience and dedication to teach and support alternative education students, and the staff must have a heart to maintain the focus of the job responsibilities (Glatthorn, 1975; M. A. Raywid, 1997).

In research conducted by the NCES, principals and teachers in grades K-12 were studied to define the job aspects of satisfied staff. NCES found the overall feeling about the job is what defines satisfaction, including the specific factors student learning, compensation, and autonomy (Perie, Baker, & Whitener, 1997). They concluded that alternative education staff often perceives themselves as simply providing opportunities to students that conventional schools cannot offer.

However, staff in community schools are committed to providing the individualized attention to students. They have a strong belief that teachers and other staff who see themselves as full and active members of a supportive school environment will work to create similar learning contexts for their students (Melaville, Berge, & Blank, 2006). Inclusively, alternative education staff recognized that those who accuse alternative education of being the last opportunity fail to understand the multicultural,

socio-economical, and academic needs of the growing population of at-risk learners (Goodman, 1999; Williams, 2008; Wilson, 2006).

## Statement of the Research Problem

According to researchers, students who are not successful in the traditional high school settings found alternative education to be a positive environment to continue their education. Students expelled from their district schools for inappropriate behaviors, are ordered to seek an alternative education (Caroleo, 2014). In some cases, students are court ordered to attend probationary led programs that monitor student behaviors inside and outside of school. Nationwide, students who attend an alternative education setting continue to experience setbacks that require additional support from other sources, including parental involvement that is occasionally court ordered (Benner & Graham, 2009; Knesting, 2008).

Each year in California, approximately 10% of students in the public-school system will be enrolled in some type of alternative education; such as community day school, county community school, or a continuation school (J. Ruiz de Velasco et al., 2008). Students in these school systems have a higher probability of dropping out of school. Data collected is frequently based on estimates due to the transiency of students, and there are no instruments that convey student achievements (Butrymowicz, 2015; J. Ruiz de Velasco et al., 2008).

Parent engagement in alternative education is strongly needed for student success (Creemers, 1994; Iwaoka, 2008; Smalls, 2010). Involving parents, helps support student academic achievement and helps increase high school graduation rates (Brown & Becket, 2007). Moreover, there is a need to identify the specific elements of parent engagement

in both alternative and traditional high schools that can significantly contribute to finding the exact needs of student to increase achievement (Iwaoka, 2008). Still, very little research exists on specific approaches to engaging parents of students in the alternative education system (Bayne, 2013).

The lack of communication between parents and school staff is a huge determinate in the success of alternative education students (Cooper & Jordan, 2003). Awareness of the discipline issues and academic achievement of students is also a major component connected to the needed collaboration between parents and schools (Miretzky, 2004). Teachers and principals must have an open mind and be disciplined when trying to engage parents in the students' education in order to make a connection with the parents (Cooper & Jordan, 2003). Additionally, research has revealed that establishing a well-organized program will give longer lasting results that will help to keep up the program (Cotton & Wikeland, 2001).

Alternative education schools often lack parent engagement. While research exists on successful student accomplishments, no research exists that specifically identifies what encourages parental involvement in their children's' education. Additionally, there is a strong need for teachers and principals to examine what steps are critical to parental engagement that are linked to improved student academic achievement. Therefore, developing an understanding of community schoolteachers and principals' perceptions of how to increase parent engagement can be beneficial in supporting student outcomes within this unique component of California's education system.

## Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand and explain how teachers and principals perceive parent engagement affects high school academic achievement within county operated community schools in Riverside County California. An additional purpose of the study was to understand and explain actions that teachers and principals believe are necessary to increase parent engagement within county operated community schools in Riverside County.

## Research Questions

This study was guided by two central questions. Each central question was divided into sub-questions.

### Central Question 1

Central Question 1 asked: *How do teachers and principals perceive parent engagement affects the academic achievement of high school students within the community schools in Riverside County?*

**Sub-Question 1**. There were three sub-questions designed to answer Central Question 1:

1.1. How do teachers and principals perceive parents are, or are not, involved in supporting their child's academic achievement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County?

1.2. What do teachers and principals perceive influence whether or not parents are engaged with their child's academic achievement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County?

1.3. What supports or barriers do teachers and principals perceive exist that affect parent engagement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County?

**Central Question 2**

Central Question 2 asked: *What do teachers and principals perceive as the actions necessary for the community schools in Riverside County to implement to improve parent engagement to increase high school student achievement?*

**Sub-Question 2**. There were three sub-questions designed to answer Central Question 2:

2.1. What actions do teachers and principals believe the county operated community schools in Riverside County can take to increase parent engagement to improve their child's academic achievement?

2.2. What actions do principals and teachers believe need to be implemented first to increase parent engagement to improve their child's academic achievement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County?

## Significance of the Problem

Approximately 5% of the students in California high schools are faced with obstacles that impeded their graduation. In 2002, a report by The NCES (2012) stated that 3.8 million students 16 through 24 years of age had not graduated (as cited in Burger, 2006). In California, averages of 10% to 15% of high school students attend an alternative education program (Warren, 2007). An alternative education program is significant to student success and high school completion, as it allows students the

opportunity to take on a different course of action (Reimer & Cash, 2003). It is important to continue research by fostering the formation of new strategies, programs, and teaching methods that will increase the numbers of high school students graduating. Inclusively, this study is necessary to help identify factors contributing to the involvement of parents in the at-risk students' education. Furthermore, it is fundamentally important to help find the obstacles impeding parental involvement, and parent perspectives on how they would like to collaborate to help support the student academic achievement (Center for Public Education, 2011).

High school dropout rates are a nationwide problem that continues to exist both in the traditional and alternative education high school settings. Traditional high schools have worked hard to graduate large amounts of student cohorts. However, not all schools have been successful in graduating all students that began together since entering high school in the ninth grade (Hartman, 2008). Since the 1970s, researchers have conducted yearly case studies focused on high school dropout rates in both the traditional and alternative education settings (Heckman, Humphries, Veramendi, & Urzua, 2014). This study sought to identify factors related to parent engagement and actions to increase their involvement to help improve the academic achievement of at-risk youth and increase graduation rates in the community schools.

## Definitions

*Academic Achievement.* Accomplishment and achievement of education through higher learning principles (Pam, 2019).

*Alternative Education.* A private reinvention to the educational system with intent to provide new approaches to learning and teaching (Quinn et al., 2006).

*At-risk.* Students are those that have academic, social, and/or emotional problems within the general population environment, and have violated the behavioral rules at their traditional schools (Ricard et al., 2013).

*County Community School.* A school that provides an instructional program focused on the California standards along with rigorous and relevant learning activities (Riverside County Office of Education [RCOE], 2016).

*Collaborative Teams.* Two or more people work together by sharing same ideas to meet the common goals (Northouse, 2016).

*Comprehensive and traditional schools.* Synonymous and are used interchangeably throughout this study. They are public schools, governed by school districts, and where the majority of children of all abilities get their primary and secondary education (Dictionary.com)

*Differentiated Instruction.* A way of teaching and giving students multiple options for taking in information (Tomlinson, 1999).

*Drop-out.* Any student who leaves school for any reason before graduation or completion of a program of studies without transferring to another educational system (Bonneau, 2008).

*Expulsion.* The act of removing a student from their comprehensive school and/or district for inappropriate behaviors and in accordance with education mandates (USDOE, 2014).

*Innovative curriculum.* A plan for learning. It is a framework, strategies, and materials designed to support and give direction to student learning, which also has dimensions that are unwritten: expectations of parents or of the school administration;

teacher skill in using various methodologies, informal lesson plans, plans that evolve from teacher-student interaction or from individual learner designing of his specific inquiry activity (Fox, 1972).

*Parent Engagement* and *parent involvement.* Are synonymous and are used interchangeably throughout this study. It is the act of parents collaborating with school staff and students in support of student academic engagement (Prevention, 2015). The collaboration happens through phone calls, emails on parent portals, parent night participation, and occasional unannounced classroom or school visits.

*Regional Learning Centers.* Education establishments that promotes student achievement and provides a diversity of student programs to students of all ages; for example Community school, Come Back, Independent Studies, Career and Technical Education (CTE), and more (RCOE, 2018).

*School disengagement.* The unwillingness of students to pay attention, be interested, optimistic, or passionate about instruction being taught in class (Balwant, 2017).

## Delimitations

The study was delimited to alternative education principals and teachers in the Riverside County Community Schools, in southern California.

## Organization of the Study

This study is organized into four chapters with the inclusion of references and appendices. Chapter II focused on the literature review of alternative education, types of alternative education, student academic achievement, significance of parent engagement, and principal and teacher perceptions. Chapter III emphasized the research design and

methodology implemented. It also focused on the type of data collection and instruments used, and helps with the analysis of the samples collected. Chapter IV presents a brief overview of the study's purpose, research methods and data collection procedures, population, sample, presentation and analysis of data, and a succinct description of the findings. Lastly, Chapter V consists of the major findings of the study, unexpected findings, conclusions, and recommendations for future studies.

# CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Chapter II examines the research and literature relevant to alternative education. In addition, it looks at how involving parents in their students' education can make a difference in their academic achievement. Chapter II begins with a historical look at the alternative education in the United States and California. The Chapter explores the issues and factors related to parent involvement and the effect on student academic performance. This chapter reviews various actions perceived by teachers and principals that influence parent involvement in their children's' education. The chapter also includes a review of the synthesis matrix that was used to identify the themes and factors that emerged from the literature.

## Historical Perspective of Alternative Education

Alternative education is a broad spectrum of activities that fall outside of the traditional school settings or systems, such as home schooling, special programs for the gifted and talented, charter schools, community day schools, county community schools, and independent studies, (L. Y. Aron, 2006). As stated by L. Y. Aron (2006) alternative education is mostly recognized as serving at-risk youth who no longer attend the traditional schools. Yet, M. A. Raywid (1994) says that alternative education schools are a "cutting edge," a new reform to education. Alternative education schools were originally designed to meet the needs of students who encountered learning issues in the traditional schools (Fitzsimons-Lovett, 2001). Although alternative education schools had the distinct purpose of offering an alternative to traditional high school, their emphasis on special instructional needs eventually changed to assist students with

academic and behavior problems (Gregg, 1998). This change caused the schools to be recognized as dumping grounds for at-risk students (Armstrong & Barber, 1997; Koetke, 1999).

The 1960s brought a new educational movement focused on great innovative curriculum, delivery, and structure that did not last long (Gregg, 1998; M. J. Raywid, 1981; Young 1990). However, this movement laid the foundation for the alternative education programs that exist today. Additionally, the movement led to the two basic systems of alternative education that are currently serving students, and are known as the outside and inside systems (Koetke, 1999). These alternative programs began evolving in the 1960s, and presently serve as the most common programs serving at-risk youth (M. A. Raywid, 1994). Policymakers and educators both believe that throughout the last decades, alternative education provided successful paths to at-risk youth. Inclusively, they believe that alternative education programs are vital to help students whose needs are not being met at the traditional schools (R. D. Barr & Parrett, 2001; M. Raywid, 1989; Wehlage & Rutter, 1987; Young, 1990).

When describing alternative education Young (1990) states that diverse alternatives to education have existed for an extended period. Furthermore, he declares that from the inception of education in America, education has been based on race, gender, and social class; and allowed the development of education to meet the flourishing standards (Young, 1990). Regardless of when alternatives in education began, what is practiced today is seen as being grounded in the social drive of the civil rights movement (C. M. Lange & Sletten, 2002).

## Alternative Education in American Schools

In the United States, there is no exact number of alternative education schools currently in existence. It is estimated over 20,000 schools are in operation, and mostly designed to serve the at-risk student populations (R. D. Barr & Parrett, 2001). Yet, alternative education school numbers can vary depending on the definition given to the programs (C. M. Lange & Sletten, 2002; C. A. Lehr & Lange, 2003). The term *alternative* defines the educational settings designed for students whose needs are not being met at the traditional school environments (Dynarski, 1999). Alternative education provides a different method of education. Its' intention is to combine the social and academic curriculum that focuses on meeting the needs of the students (Kilpatrick, McCarten, McKeown, & Gallagher, 2007).

Nevertheless, the proliferation of alternative education schools in the 1970s focused on assisting the low socio-economic and culturally diverse ethnic background of students. Similarly, Young (1990) describes the diversity of educational opportunities to be based on race, gender, and social class, and that they opened a new path for the continuously changing educative system in American schools. Schools during this time were formed without structural basis, and had no grade levels or mandated course requirements (Wells, 1993). As stated by Wells (1993) the schools were guided by principles such as:

- The "personalization of education"- individual student needs and experiences are the starting point of all learning.
- Active learning-hands-on activities that involve the "whole" child are preferable to passive learning.

- Supportive teaching-the teacher is more an adviser than an authoritarian instructor.
- Schools community-the school is a social community and education is a social activity.
- Community-based learning-students benefit from a variety of learning resources, especially those within the local community.
- Student participation-students take part in at least some of the major decision-making at the school.
- Cooperation, not competition-schools deemphasize competition for grades or class rank and stress cooperative forms of learning (Wells, 1993, p. 35).

By 1981, M. A. Raywid (1994) declared that approximately 10,000 alternative education schools in existence were serving three million students. In addition, these schools were believed to be founded for political or social issues, and alleged to be serving mainly white, middle and upper class students (Reimer & Cash, 2003). The civil rights movement, supported the alternative education movement by questioning whether the traditional education system was the best fit for all students (Fitzsimons-Lovett, 2001). The main reason was that students from low socio-economic backgrounds, special education, and culturally diverse backgrounds were not suited for the traditional school systems (C. M. Lang & Sletten, 2002; M. J. Raywid, 1981; Young, 1990). All the singled-out approaches were believed to be racist and seen as a conception to help the upper-class students succeed (M. J. Raywid, 1981; Young, 1990).

## Alternative Education in California

Alternative education schools exist in a diversity of settings that are not all appropriate for the at-risk student population being referenced in this study (M. A. Raywid 1994; C. M. Lange & Sletten, 1995). At the age of accountability, no official data exists on alternative education in California (Butrymowicz, 2015; Sackheim, 2017). Yet, there has been a push for more data processes to happen, and regardless of their permanency, alternative education schools are strikingly understudied (Glassett, 2012). Alternative education is divided into a variety of schools and programs such as: Continuation Programs

- Juvenile Court Schools
- Community Day Schools
- County Community Schools
- Independent Studies Programs
- Opportunity Programs
- Magnet Programs
- Charter Schools
- Private and Parochial Schools
- Home Schooling
- Early College High Schools
- Middle College High Schools
- Federally funded Native American High Schools (CDE, 2017a).

Hwang (2003) and D. Kelly (1993) state that the history of alternative education in California was established in 1919, and that from 1920 to 1945 alternative education

schools were run as part-time schooling centers for working youth. For example, Play Mountain Place is one of the oldest alternative education schools. It was founded by Phyllis Fleishman in 1949. The school was built in Los Angeles, California with a mission to provide an experiential learning environment to meet the students' individual learning styles (Play Mountain Place, 2017).

Subsequently, from 1945 to 1960 alternative education schools were redesigned to assist students with psychological issues that were excluded from the traditional schools. From 1960 until today alternative education schools gained a new image as alternative education schools. Nevertheless, these schools have always served the same type of student population including dropouts, threats to society, and academic failures (Hwang, 2003; D. Kelly, 1993). Inclusively, alternative education schools have kept up with similar characteristics like, schedule flexibility, independent studies programs, and life skills preparation (D. Kelly, 1993).

Continuation schools offer students the flexibility of fitting their classes to their job schedules, and must attend a minimum of three hours per week. These schools serve students that are sixteen and older, and who are at risk of not graduating (CDE, 2017b). Likewise, juvenile court schools in California provide educational settings for students who are under the protection of a juvenile court system. These schools are focused on delivering education to incarcerated youth in juvenile halls, juvenile homes, day centers, juvenile ranches, or juvenile camps (CDE, 2017b).

Furthermore, opportunity schools assist students who have truancy, academic, and behavioral issues. Opportunity programs are a temporary placement for students to receive support and guidance in regaining their academic engagement. Overcoming the

learning barriers helps students return to their traditional class atmosphere. In a 2010 report, the CDE found that there were 32 Opportunity schools with a total of 2,709 students enrolled, and it was also noted that there is no collection of student enrollment in opportunity schools as in the traditional school settings (as cited in CDE, 2017b).

The CDE (2017) independent study program provides a much different way of learning. Students are guided by the teacher, but then work independently and do not attend classes daily. Independent study programs are designed to help students with health problems, are parents, work, or simply feel that they are unsuccessful in the traditional classroom settings. Students cannot be obligated to enroll in this program, but have the option to choose the program if they feel it meets their needs. Nearly 168,000 students in kindergarten through grade twelve received more than 50% of their instruction through independent study in the 2014-15 school year. Approximately, 64,491 students in kindergarten through grade eight and 103,485 students in grades 9 through 12 received more than 50% of their instruction through independent study (CDE, 2017b).

Magnet programs are offered in public schools and concentrate on specific areas of study to specialize such as: science, math, art, and career education. School districts have different reasons for setting up these magnet programs. For example, they want to provide students with different educational choices, the construction of a balanced student population, and the opportunity of specialized instruction for all students interested (CDE, 2017b). On the contrary, charter schools are independently run public schools that use their uniquely built rigorous curriculum. Charter schools have more freedom and flexibility in operating their schools, but have a higher level of

accountability from the state. California was the second state to adopt charter schools, and currently there are approximately 982 active schools (CDE, 2017b).

Private and parochial schools run their own programs and have the option of accreditation by the Western Association of Schools (WASC). Yet, they are required to file an annual affidavit with the superintendent of public instruction. Private and parochial school years and length of instructional days are set by the schools. Additionally, they are not required to follow the state's adopted content standards (USDOE, 2014).

Home schooling program is a different way that parents can educate their children at home. Parents have the options to teach using an existing curriculum from a private or charter school, or independent program. The CDE does not offer guides on how to home school children. However, parents must provide the schools of their choice with an affidavit stating that they are homeschooling their children (CDE, 2017b).

Early college high schools are an innovation partnership between charter and non-charter schools and community colleges, California State Universities, and University of California systems allowing students to complete high school and two years of college in a blended program of four years or less (CDE, 2017b). Likewise, Middle College High Schools (MCHS) are secondary schools that work as a collaborative system between district schools and community colleges that serve high-risk students. MCHS allow students concurrent enrollment in college courses, and are exempt from the 240-minute school day requirement (CDE, 2017).

In a 2014-15 school year report, the CDE (2017) states that 36,755 students were identified as American Indian. It also, says that California has one of the largest

populations of American Indians students in the nation. The Native American schools provide cultural, academic and linguistic support for the American Indian students and incorporate curriculum aligned to meet the state's designated standards (CDE, 2017).

California provides funding for seven types of alternative education school programs providing service to at-risk students. These schools work independently offering programs that address the needs of students with behavioral or academic issues (Warren, 2007). The state of California does not have a system of alternative schools; instead, it has a group of schools focusing on various instructional methods that will meet the students' diverse learning styles. The seven types of alternative education schools are identified and described (see Table 1). While alternative education schools provide a curriculum focused on California content standards, independent charter schools have the flexibility to experiment and design innovative instructional curriculum (EdData, 2017). Likewise, juvenile court schools also provide standard based curriculum to incarcerated youth (CDE, 2017). Schools of choice are voluntary and offer students different means of meeting the academic requirements. Yet, the curriculum is similarly state standard based, as are comprehensive schools.

Table 1

*School Types*

| School Type | Description |
|---|---|
| Continuation | District schools that refer 10th to12th graders at risk of not graduating from high school, and provide flexible schedules allowing students to earn credits at a faster pace. |
| Independent Charter | Public school run by a chartering authority that can be district, county office of education, or state board of education. These schools are independent and have more flexibility to experiment and design innovative instructional curriculum. |
| Community | Community schools focus on students that need academic support, and social/emotional rehabilitation. After successful treatment, rehabilitation, and completion of requirements students are readmitted to their comprehensive schools. |
| School of Choice | Provide different means of achieving grade-level standards and meeting students' needs, and are voluntary. |
| Community Day | Provide challenging curriculum that focus on individual student needs. They also help students develop pro-social skills, self-esteem, and resiliency. These schools also provide school to career and other real-world connections as part of the curriculum. |
| Juvenile Court | Teach students under the protection of the juvenile court system while incarcerated in places such as: halls, camps, day centers, or regional youth facilities. |
| Opportunity | Provide additional support for students who are habitually truant from instruction, non-attendance, insubordinate, low academic performance. They are operated by districts or county offices. |

*Note*. California Department of Education, 2017, "Alternative Schools & Programs of Choice – CalEdFacts." Retrieved from http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/eo/as/cefalternativeschl.asp

The 2013-14 school year (see Table 2) provides information for the seven types of alternative education schools, number of schools, student enrollment, targeted population,

and the administrative entity for each of the seven types of schools (CDE, 2017). Either school districts or county offices of education administer four out of the seven school types. While the community schools are run by the county offices of education, continuation schools are only run by the school districts. In 2013-2014, there were 47,628 more students, enrolled in continuation schools than in community schools.

Table 2

*Alternative Schools, Number and Enrollment, 2013-14*

| School Type | Number of Schools | Fall Enrollment | Target Population | Administrative Entity |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Continuation | 463 | 62,830 | Students ages 16 or older who are at risk of not graduating. | District |
| Independent Charter | 61 | 28,931 | Students who have been expelled, suspended, truant, are pregnant or parenting, or who have dropped out of school. | Independent |
| Community | 68 | 15,202 | Expelled students, students with behavior or attendance problems, or who are on probation or parole. | County Office of Education |
| School of Choice | 38 | 13,283 | Students who have been expelled, suspended, truant, are pregnant or parenting, or who have dropped out of school. | District or County Office of Education |
| Community Day | 234 | 7,353 | Students who have been expelled or have behavior or attendance problems. | District or County Office of Education |

(continued)

Table 2

*Alternative Schools, Number and Enrollment, 2013-14*

| School Type | Number of Schools | Fall Enrollment | Target Population | Administrative Entity |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Juvenile Court | 76 | 6,776 | Students who are incarcerated In local juvenile detention facilities. | District or County Office of Education |
| Opportunity | 29 | 2,212 | Short-term intervention for students with attendance, behavior, or academic problems. | District or County Office of Education |
| Total | 974 | 136,587 | | |

*Note.* Adapted from California Department of Education, California Education Code

**Alternative Education in the Riverside County Office of Education (RCOE)**

An exclusive and diverse population of students is supported in all their educational needs within the alternative education programs implemented at RCOE. Alternative education schools provide an environment that is suitable to the needs of many at risk students that are not present in a traditional high school Felix (2012). As identified by Ricard et al. (2013), at risk students are those who "have violated the code of conduct at their home schools" (p. 285). The program populations served at RCOE are alternative education, special education, and migrant education. Implementation of high-quality standards based core instruction, differentiated instruction by teachers to help students complete high school graduation, earn credits to help students return to their districts, complete the High School Equivalency Test or GED, and complete applications for jobs and higher education are among RCOEs services to students (RCOE, 2017).

RCOE's (2017) vision is to be a collaborative organization characterized by the highest quality employees providing leadership programs, and services to school districts, schools, and students countywide. The alternative education schools and programs established throughout the Riverside County are: (a) Cal-SAFE, (b) Come Back Kids (CBK) Charter School, (c) Court Schools, (d) Community Schools, and (e) Desert Edge School Adult Education Schools, (RCOE, 2017). Furthermore, RCOE has gone beyond what California defines as alternative education school types, and has added the Cal-SAFE, Come Back Kids (CBK), and Desert Edge Adult Schools in their definition of alternative education.

The (California School Age Families Education) Cal-SAFE program began serving pregnant and parenting teens in 1971, and became operational in 2000. This program serves 26 students within all the Cal-SAFE schools in RCOE. Both female and male students who are under the age of 18, who are expectant or custodial parents, and or parents actively involved in their roles in caring for their children can enroll in Cal-SAFE with a district referral (RCOE, 2017).

Likewise, CBK is a charter school that offers prevention/intervention services to students ages 16 to 24, and who wish to re-enroll in an educational program. Students are given the opportunity to complete high school diplomas, prepare for the high school equivalency exam, have access to A-G approved courses, take dual enrollment classes at the community college, participate in CTE courses, and are exposed to high-tech careers. RCOE extends their services to students at 24 CBK locations throughout the RCOE district (RCOE, 2017).

Court school programs provide state and county board of education approved core academic programs to incarcerated youth. The program designs were created to meet the academic requirements for high school graduation or high school equivalency. The curriculum consists of the four core subjects; English, math, history, and science. In addition, physical education, and electives are also taught.

Similarly, the community school programs focus on the California state standards. Students are taught using rigorous and relevant learning activities. The activities include project-based service learning, high-impact classroom strategies and routines, Positive Behavioral Supports and Intervention (PBIS) with restorative practices, inter-disciplinary thematic lessons, and literacy across the curriculum (RCOE, 2017).

Desert Edge adult programs partner with the sheriff and probation to provide education to adults in the county jails or the day reporting center (DRC). The schools help students earn a high school diploma, high school equivalency, and provide adult basic CTE programs such as, Construction Technology, Computer Information Systems (CIS), and Graphics Technology (RCOE, 2017). Furthermore, the county community schools and regional learning centers are found in the following southern California cities:

- Banning
- Blythe
- Corona
- Indio
- Moreno Valley
- Murrieta

- Palm Springs
- Perris, Riverside
- San Jacinto
- Temecula (see Table 3).

Some principals have duties at multiple school sites.

Table 3

*RCOE Community School Locations*

| Community School | Phone | Location | Principal |
|---|---|---|---|
| Arlington Regional Learning Center | (951) 826-4400 | 6511 Arlington Avenue Riverside, CA 92504 | Vincent Chugbo |
| Betty G. Gibbel Regional Learning Center | (951) 826-4250 | 1251 Eagle Drive San Jacinto, CA 92583 | Sandra Penaloza |
| Blythe Community School | (760) 922-0944 | 811 W. Chanslorway Blythe, CA 92225 | Lucie Gonzalez |
| Corona Community School | (951) 280-7083 | 37886 Neece Street Corona, CA 92879 | Vincent Chugbo |
| David L. Long Regional Learning Center | (951) 249-8700 | 41350 Guava Street Murrieta, CA 92562 | Randy Covacevich |
| Don F. Kenny Regional Learning Center | (760) 863-3065 | 47-336 Oasis St. Indio, CA 92201 | Arthur Kimball |
| Hemet Cal-SAFE | (951) 826-4983 | 26868 San Jacinto Street Hemet, CA 92543 | Sandra Penaloza |
| Moreno Valley Cal-SAFE | (951) 826-4900 | 13730 Perris Boulevard Moreno Valley, CA 92553 | Rose Ann Gasser |
| Palm Springs Community School | (760) 922-0944 | 1800 E. Vista Chino Palm Springs, CA 92262 | Lucie Gonzalez |
| Safe House Community School | (951) 688-2105 | 9685 Hayes Street Riverside, CA 92503 | Timothy Worthington |
| Val Verde Regional Learning Center | (951) 826-4300 | 3010 Webster Avenue Perris, CA 92571 | Rose Ann Gasser |

*Note*. Riverside County Office of Education, 2017.

## Community Schools in California

Community schools in California, as well as comprehensive schools have the same accountability requirements set by the state, and are designed to function like comprehensive schools. Similarly, community schools have minimum graduation requirements that are set by the state and the school boards, which allow students the opportunity to earn credits required for graduation (Schiber, 2006). According to Williams (2008) more than 10% of students from the traditional schools attend one type of alternative education program. Even though some students or their parents have chosen this school environment, other students are placed in this school system. Due to the lack of data, researchers found limitations when trying to make comparisons between community schools and comprehensive schools causing the findings to be misleading (J. Ruiz de Velasco & Gonzales, 2017). J. Ruiz de Velasco and Gonzales (2017) stated that confirmation of size and demography of alternative education schools is impossible due to two reasons. One reason is the transiency of students that makes it impossible to maintain a count of students across or within the districts. The other reason is the participation in the Alternative School Accountability Model (ASAM), in which participation is voluntary and data does not coincide with the numbers identified by the CDE (J. Ruiz de Velasco & Gonzales, 2017).

ASAM is a CDE model that was created in 2000, simultaneously with the 1999 Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA) to help identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas of improvement of all schools. The state standards developed did not fairly measure the at-risk student serving schools when compared to the traditional schools (CDE, 2017). In 2017, at the State Board of Education meeting, the CDE adopted a new

system for accountability beginning in 2018. The system is a dashboard program for alternative education called Dashboard Alternative School Status (DASS), and holds all alternative education programs accountable for their data (CDE 2017). The DASS will be updated every fall with the most recent data and design improvements will be made from user comments. In addition, DASS is designed to help identify the schools' strengths, weaknesses, and areas of improvement. Furthermore, alternative education schools also known as community schools are broken down into different types such as community day and county community (Williams, 2008).

**Community Day Schools**

The CDE (2015), states that a total of 204 community day schools reported an enrollment of 7,353 students. Currently, there are 192 active community day schools. Community day schools serve students who have been expelled from their traditional schools, or who have had attendance or behavior issues. Community day schools are run by the school districts or county offices of education.

The purpose of the community day schools is to provide challenging classes, and prepare students with the necessary skills to continue into higher education. The schools run a daily 360-minute schedule that includes academic programs by providing challenging curriculum and individual support to all students. In addition, the schools focus on assisting students with developing pro-social skills, their self-esteem, and resiliency. Community day schools are designed to have a low student-teacher ratio, to be able to provide the utmost individual support to each student. Students enrolled in the community day schools, also benefit from the community resources such as the probation and the health and human personnel that work with the at-risk youth (CDE, 2017).

## County Community School

According to the latest CDE (2017) report on October 2010 there were a total of 75 active county community schools within the 58 school districts in California. These schools served 18,382 students.

The purpose of the county community school is to serve students in grades kindergarten through high school who are expelled from their traditional schools, referred by SARB or probation, or sometimes at the request of the parent or guardian. The county community schools' program operates 360-minute school days focusing on providing learning opportunities in academic and independent life skills, social behaviors, and positive self-concepts. Students can graduate from the county community schools, but the schools' goal is to assist students in transitioning back to their traditional schools, continue to secondary education, or to employments (CDE, 2017).

However, county community schools are only run by the county offices of education. County community schools serve students on probation or on parole and not attending any school. Inclusively, county community schools' educational programs are characteristically student centered, adapted to meet the individual needs of students, and helps students transition to educational, training, or employment settings (CDE, 2016).

## Expulsion Rates

An expulsion is a process by which a student is expelled from a school for committing an offense that is deemed expellable by the state law (Frydman & King, 2006). When the offense is committed the student is first suspended for a short period, and waits for a hearing date. Suspension periods vary from state to state, but may sometimes be extended up to thirty consecutive school days (Frydman & King, 2006).

In order to ensure the safety of students and staff, the state of California's Education Code Sections 48900 & 48915, state that the principal or superintendent of schools shall recommend expulsion of students when necessary, and will do so in a timely manner to ensure students do not lose school time (CDE, 2017). Students that commit any offenses stated in the sections 48900 & 48915 shall be referred to a hearing by school administration. Then, the school district's board makes the final decision on an expulsion or not (California Education Codes 48900 & 48915). In California, expelled students are still required to attend school, and providing expelled students an educational opportunity is a legislated mandate of alternative education programs (California Education Code 48915.2).

According to the California State Superintendent, Tom Torlakson, student suspensions and expulsions dropped for five years in a row. In the 2011-12, school year through the 2016-17 there was a 42% decrease in expulsions. Statewide there was a difference of 4,101 less expulsions within the five-year span. In 2011-12 there were 9,758 expulsions and in 2016/2017 there were 5,657 (CDE, 2017). Expulsions in grades K-12 have decreased, but when broken into ethnicity subgroups, some groups have risen in both suspensions and expulsions. Data from the 2014-15 California Suspension and Expulsion Report states that out of 5,758 student expulsions, 66 of those were students with multiple expulsions (CDE, 2017). Inclusively, the report declares that major expulsion violations were due to drug affiliation (33.5%), violent incidents with no physical injury (25.7%), and possession of weapons (17.5%). However, school districts have formed community schools within the district in order to avoid expulsions, and to preserve their funding (Peterson, 2017).

## School Dropouts

A dropout is someone who abandons an attempt, activity, or chosen path (Merriam-Webster, 1930). After conducting a review of 25 years, R. W. Rumberger and Lim (2008) state that the United States faced a dropout crisis. In 2000, students entering public high schools in the United States were followed, and nearly 256% of those students failed to earn a high school diploma in the 2003-04 school year (Laird, Kienzi, DeBell, & Chapman, 2007).

In California, data was collected on 9th graders in that same period of 25 years. The data states that 26% of those students did not graduate. Dropout rates can be drastically high in some areas nearly reaching a 50% loss of students (R. M. Rumberger & Lim, 2008). School dropouts at whatever rate become a dilemma that needs to be addressed nationally, and researched immediately (Blue, 2012). The neglect of the school dropouts is an alarming threat to society (J. M. Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morison, 2006). In California, statewide data for all counties in the class of 2015-16 says that a 9.7% of students dropped out of high school (see Table 4). This rate represents the total cohort of 486,126 students, which were 47,274 that did not graduate (CDE, 2017). Due to the lack of data on the specific numbers of alternative education student graduates and dropouts, the researcher for this study used data on the total number of students in all traditional public high schools in the United States, and data specific to the state of California.

Table 4

*California Graduation and Dropout Rates by Counties 2015-16*

| CDS | County | Students | Grads | Grad Rate | Dropout | D/O Rate |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Alameda | 16,659 | 14,278 | 85.71 | 1,430 | 8.58 |
| 2 | Alpine | * | * | * | * | * |
| 3 | Amador | 314 | 276 | 87.9 | 35 | 11.1 |
| 4 | Butte | 2472 | 2,145 | 86.77 | 221 | 8.94 |
| 5 | Calaveras | 538 | 506 | 94.05 | 12 | 2.23 |
| 6 | Colusa | 365 | 326 | 89.32 | 31 | 8.49 |
| 7 | Contra Costa | 13,247 | 11,781 | 88.93 | 770 | 5.81 |
| 8 | Del Norte | 345 | 268 | 77.68 | 32 | 9.28 |
| 9 | El Dorado | 2,233 | 2,030 | 90.91 | 101 | 4.52 |
| 10 | Fresno | 14,532 | 12,119 | 83.4 | 1,467 | 10.1 |
| 11 | Glenn | 543 | 402 | 74.03 | 103 | 19 |
| 12 | Humboldt | 1,454 | 1,262 | 86.8 | 124 | 8.53 |
| 13 | Imperial | 2,742 | 2,428 | 88.55 | 156 | 5.69 |
| 14 | Inyo | 1,009 | 344 | 34.09 | 406 | 40.2 |
| 15 | Kern | 13,347 | 11,248 | 84.27 | 1,441 | 10.8 |
| 16 | Kings | 2,005 | 1,664 | 82.99 | 206 | 10.3 |
| 17 | Lake | 633 | 540 | 85.31 | 70 | 11.1 |
| 18 | Lassen | 424 | 363 | 85.61 | 42 | 9.91 |
| 19 | Los Angeles | 120,723 | 98,460 | 81.56 | 12,631 | 10.5 |
| 20 | Madera | 2,211 | 1,867 | 84.44 | 213 | 9.63 |
| 21 | Marin | 2,286 | 2,088 | 91.34 | 131 | 5.73 |
| 22 | Mariposa | 160 | 149 | 93.13 | * | * |
| 23 | Mendocino | 1,022 | 871 | 85.23 | 111 | 10.9 |
| 24 | Merced | 4,200 | 3,744 | 89.14 | 318 | 7.57 |
| 25 | Modoc | 109 | 100 | 91.74 | * | * |
| 26 | Mono | 392 | 144 | 36.73 | 139 | 35.5 |
| 27 | Monterey | 4,999 | 4,274 | 85.5 | 341 | 6.82 |
| 28 | Napa | 1,680 | 1,532 | 91.19 | 82 | 4.88 |
| 29 | Nevada | 1,824 | 920 | 50.44 | 612 | 33.6 |
| 30 | Orange | 39,749 | 36,186 | 91.04 | 2,060 | 5.18 |
| 31 | Placer | 5,635 | 5,157 | 91.52 | 282 | 5 |
| 32 | Plumas | 177 | 146 | 82.49 | 14 | 7.91 |

(continued)

Table 4

*California Graduation & Dropout Rates by Counties 2015-16*

| CDS | County | Students | Grads | Grad Rate | Dropout | D/O Rate |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 33 | Riverside | 32,592 | 29,137 | 89.4 | 2,027 | 6.22 |
| 34 | Sacramento | 18,373 | 14,952 | 81.38 | 1,879 | 10.2 |
| 35 | San Benito | 880 | 795 | 90.34 | 65 | 7.39 |
| 36 | San Bernardino | 32,695 | 27,119 | 82.95 | 3,311 | 10.1 |
| 37 | San Diego | 39,643 | 32,480 | 81.93 | 3,133 | 7.9 |
| 38 | San Francisco | 4,705 | 3,778 | 80.3 | 472 | 10 |
| 39 | San Joaquin | 11,025 | 9,164 | 83.12 | 1,150 | 10.4 |
| 40 | San Luis Obispo | 2,886 | 2,663 | 92.27 | 137 | 4.75 |
| 41 | San Mateo | 6,579 | 5,883 | 89.42 | 449 | 6.82 |
| 42 | Santa Barbara | 5,224 | 4,630 | 88.63 | 376 | 7.2 |
| 43 | Santa Clara | 21,011 | 17,449 | 83.05 | 2,506 | 11.9 |
| 44 | Santa Cruz | 3,140 | 2,696 | 85.86 | 301 | 9.59 |
| 45 | Shasta | 2,147 | 1,902 | 88.59 | 172 | 8.01 |
| 46 | Sierra | 34 | 33 | 97.06 | * | * |
| 47 | Siskiyou | 417 | 383 | 91.85 | 20 | 4.8 |
| 48 | Solano | 4,825 | 4,086 | 84.68 | 514 | 10.7 |
| 49 | Sonoma | 5,339 | 4,505 | 84.38 | 517 | 9.68 |
| 50 | Stanislaus | 8,336 | 6,994 | 83.9 | 827 | 9.92 |
| 51 | Sutter | 1,520 | 1,320 | 86.84 | 130 | 8.55 |
| 52 | Tehama | 660 | 580 | 87.88 | 53 | 8.03 |
| 53 | Trinity | 104 | 93 | 89.42 | * | * |
| 54 | Tulare | 7,217 | 6,147 | 85.17 | 724 | 10 |
| 55 | Tuolumne | 522 | 461 | 88.31 | 41 | 7.85 |
| 56 | Ventura | 11,036 | 9,509 | 86.16 | 807 | 7.31 |
| 57 | Yolo | 2,240 | 2,009 | 89.69 | 171 | 7.63 |
| 58 | Yuba | 1,055 | 818 | 77.54 | 146 | 13.8 |
| Statewide Totals | | 486,126 | 407,208 | 83.77 | 47,274 | 9.72 |

*Note*. Grads = Graduates; Grad = Graduate; D/O = Dropout. Adapted from "Riverside County Office of Education, 2018. Retrieved from https://www.rcoe.us/

**Potential Factors Leading to Dropouts**

A diversity of environmental factors has become a huge contributor to the academic failure of students that can lead to school dropouts. Factors such as, poverty,

physical and emotional abuse, homelessness, drug use and abuse, and pregnancy are a predominant problem (Blue, 2011). Inclusively, these factors have become extremely noticeable to school staff that it is easy to identify which students are at risk of dropping out of schools (Jerald, 2006).

Poverty is a major cause of student dropouts that begins with students being hungry and not able to concentrate in the classroom, thus causing disruptive behaviors (Freudenberg & Ruglis, 2007). Due to poverty issues, students' health also becomes a problem. Research led by Wadsworth et al. (2008) found that poverty-stricken students can suffer from stress causing both physical or psychological issues contributors of inappropriate actions such as, teen pregnancy, school drop-out, and drug abuse.

Homelessness is another key factor that contributes to the dropout rates (Fowler, Toro, & Miles, 2009). Often students become another adult support in the family to help sustain the family, and eventually dropout of school to keep working. Likewise, the possibility of student failures can be associated to single parent living and that is why students often work and stop going to school (Van Dorn, Bowen, Blau, 2006).

Additionally, becoming parents as adolescents is another factor that impulses students to leave school. Parenthood at such a young age also correlates to increased dropout rates, as well as decreased academic achievement (Somers, 2006). Research by Barnet, Arroyo, Devoe, & Duggan (2004) revealed that half of adolescent pregnant students fail to complete high school. In the United States 30% of high school drop-outs were pregnancy related. Yet, in California, schools are not required to collect data on pregnant students making it unclear as to how many students are from traditional or alternative education high schools (Salceda, Milionis & White, 2015).

**Behaviors of Dropouts**

According to Gasper (2009), many researchers have found that delinquency and drug use are connected to high dropout rates. Nevertheless, claims by prior research found that delinquency and drug use are symptoms resulting from other underlying issues that lead students to drop out of school. Dropouts face a tough economy that focuses on education being fundamentally important to their lives. Students face a competitive time where high school diplomas are required for being hired, and being unemployed leads to welfare dependency and in some cases imprisonment (Gasper, 2009). Yet, delinquency and drug use have been found to be associated to academic incompetency, school disengagement, sexual activity at a young age, pregnancy, and independence from parents (Farnworth, Schweinhart, & Berrueta-Clement, 1985; Krohn, Lizotte, & Perez, 1997; Liska & Reed, 1985; Mensch & Kandel, 1992).

**Community Problems**

Yearly estimates suggest that students that dropout of high schools will earn $9,200 less than students who graduate. On average, their lifetime incomes will gross $375,000 less than high school graduates and $1 million less that college graduates (Burrus & Roberts, 2012; Center for Labor Market Studies, 2007). Dropout rates increase on a yearly basis leading to a growing epidemic (Burrus & Roberts, 2012). R. M. Rumberger (2013), states that students living in poor communities are more vulnerable to having friends who are dropouts, which increases the possibility of them dropping out too. The students' decision to dropout leads to unemployment, poverty-stricken lifestyles, public assistance dependence, unhealthy conditions, imprisonment,

divorce, and single parent households, which can lead to raising children who will also dropout of school (J. M. Bridgeland et al., 2006).

The increasing dropout rate not only causes financial hardships for the individuals, but also disturbs society's economy (Burrus & Roberts, 2012). As stated by Burrus and Roberts (2012) in 2001, dropouts ages 16 to 24 made up 40% of people who received some form of public assistance. Inclusively, researchers found that each dropout student who becomes involved with drugs costs the nation $1.7 to $2.3 million throughout their lifetime leading to a billion-dollar revenue loss to the American economy (Achieve, 2006; Christenson & Thurlow, 2004).

**Dropout Rate Importance**

In the United States public schools, 607,789 students dropped out of school in the 2008/09 school year, and there was approximately 1.3 million youth that did not graduate (R. M. Rumberger, 2011). Additionally, the census for 2010 estimated 28 million dropouts were 18 years old. Likewise, national concern is based on many studies and programs that found how expensive the increased number of dropouts can be to society (R. M. Rumberger, 2011). Governmental data gathered from the 2009-10 school year shows that only 31% of the dropouts got a job. Research conducted by Belfield and Levin (2007) states that students who do graduate have a better chance of leading successful lives with higher salary employments. Moreover, students that dropout are at higher risk of making bad choices that will affect their physical and emotional well-being (Belfield & Levin, 2007). Some of the negative factors that contribute to the dropout students' well-being are teenage pregnancies out of wedlock, shorter lifespans due to poor health decisions, and social-emotional distress (Pleis & Lucas, 2009).

## Financial Impact in the United States

According to the NCES (2011), there was an increase of poverty levels in 1980 to 2009 that focused on 18 to 24 year olds. The impact of dropping out of high school causes high unemployment rates and poverty level incomes for students without diplomas (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). The unemployment rate at 12.4% for high school dropouts, while the weekly earnings increase based on the attainment of higher educational levels by the people (see Table 5).

Table 5

*Earnings and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment*

| Unemployment Rate in 2012 (percent) | Schooling | Median weekly Earnings in 2012 (dollar) |
|---|---|---|
| 2.5 | Doctoral degree | 1,624 |
| 2.1 | Professional degree | 1,735 |
| 3.5 | Master's degree | 1,300 |
| 4.5 | Bachelor's degree | 1,066 |
| 6.2 | Associate's degree | 785 |
| 7.7 | Some college, no degree | 727 |
| 8.3 | High school diploma | 652 |
| 12.4 | Less than a high school diploma | 471 |
| All workers 6.8% | - | All workers $815 |

*Note.* Adapted from *Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey*. Retrieved from https://www.bls.gov/emp/chart-unemployment-earnings-education.htm

## Dropout in California

In California, an enormous weight is placed on tax paying citizens as the number of dropouts is a billion-dollar crises (Yatchisin, 2007). A study conducted by the California Dropout Research Project at the University of Santa Barbara found that applying the proven interventions would positively generate financial and social

remunerations. They calculated benefits totaling $392,000 per student, which would be of benefit to the California economy (Yatchisin, 2007).

As the dropouts reach their 20th year without a diploma, they are estimated to cost the state $120,000 per year. Then, over the course of their lives, these same student dropouts will cost the state $46.4 million, equaling 2.9% of the state's revenues (R. M. Rumberger, 2011). Inclusively, the state loses $2.5 billion in crime related costs.

**Dropouts in Riverside County**

Student dropouts not only weaken their personal futures, but also present significant problems to society. School dropouts have significantly lower lifetime earnings, and are three and a half times more likely to commit crimes than those who remain in school and receive a high school diploma. Based on the statewide data, it was estimated that each week in Riverside County alone, three busloads of students in grades 7 to 12 dropped out of school (RCOE, 2011). A data report taken from the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) by the CDE (2011) made a comparison between 2008 and 2009. The increase of school dropouts was so huge the data was considered unreliable. The data stated that only Riverside County alone had an 875% dropout rate increase, and statewide there was a 500% increase. This was the first dropout report posted using CALPADS data (RCOE, 2011).

However, in a 2014-15 school year report, the number of students graduating is increasing, and therefore decreasing the dropout rates. Students are preparing for college at greater rates than ever previously recorded (RCOE, 2017). Inclusively, the data shows that Riverside County's graduation rate is ranked third in the state. Students that began high school in Riverside County in 2011 represented an estimated 87.4% of graduates in

the 2014-15 graduation ceremonies. Likewise, Riverside County's growing economy depends on the educated, experienced, and skilled employees. The community expands and reaps higher gains when greater numbers of students become professionals (The Community Foundation, 2017). The population in Riverside County is 2,329,271 and 853,000 students enrolled in grades K-12. The median salary is $52,400 for residents holding a bachelor degree, and only 13% of residents ages 25 or older have earned a bachelor's degree. By the year 2030, 38% of employments will require a bachelor's degree (The Community Foundation, 2017).

## Importance of Parent Engagement

### Definition

Parent engagement and parent involvement is used synonymously throughout this study. Parent engagement is the collaboration of families and communities building a positive and caring educational environment for students (Christensen & Cleary, 1990; J. L. Epstein, 1995; Prevention, 2015). J. L. Epstein (1995) further defines parent engagement as the active participation and communication between parents and the school staff, practice of good parenting skills, parent volunteering at school, and the continual involvement in school related decision-making. Furthermore, Christensen and Cleary (1990) mention that active parent engagement leads to the identification of teacher skills and a heightened parental understanding of the school's performance and expectations. Inclusively, parental awareness of how schools function helps to promote higher student academic performance (Loucks, 1992).

Parent engagement can be a key factor in the academic success of students, support to school (USDOE, 2014). Instilling the importance of education through loving

relationships helps build an assertive student (Vongprateep, 2015). Parent engagement can be as simple as knowing where students are, who they are with, and what they are doing. Inclusively, parental monitoring research exists related to domains such as, academics that include awareness of students' class schedules, and behavior history in schools (K. L. Henry, 2007). Building strong relationship between parent and student helps deter any negative outcomes; principally any emotional problems students may be experiencing (Salzinger et al., 2010). Furthermore, research reveals that parental engagement is imperative for student success (K. L. Henry et al., 2012; Hooven, Pike, & Walsh, 2013; Rath et al., 2008).

**Theoretical Foundations**

Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory states that students learn from observation and communication with important people in their lives, and that students easily absorb all messages conveyed through appropriate behaviors. This assumption lead researchers to conclude that students are more apt to perform better in school by observing their parent's interest and involvement in their education (Fan & Chen, 2001; W. H. Jeynes, 2003, 2007). When taking a closer look at the research, there are powerful indicators that the most effective forms of parent involvement are those that engage parents in working directly with their youth on learning activities at home (Cotton & Wikelund, 2001). Inclusively, ongoing research states that involvement of family improves academic achievement, absenteeism, and most importantly, it helps to build a trusting bond between parents and their children's capacity to succeed (L. E. Garcia & Thornton, 2014).

The Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 5-Level Model of Parental Involvement was designed based on three essential questions:

- Why do (don't) families become involved?
- What do families do when they are involved?
- How does family involvement make a positive difference in student outcomes?

The first level suggests three major factors that influence variety and frequency of parent involvement, which are personal motivators, perceptions of invitations to be involved, and life context variables. The second level argues that parents influence the student attributes necessary for school success via four specific kinds of activities: encouragement, modeling, reinforcement and instruction. The third level states that these mechanisms remain inert unless students perceive their parents' actions. In this way, student perceptions of their parents' use of the four mechanisms is an essential channel whereby parents' beliefs and behaviors are translated into attributes that lead to academic success. The fourth level views students as authors of their academic success. It describes a set of four student beliefs and behaviors associated with academic achievement: (a) academic self-efficacy, (b) intrinsic motivation to learn, (c) self-regulatory skills, and (d) social dimensions of school success. Finally, level five emphasizes that parent involvement influences and to some degree predicts student outcomes (Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Demsey, 2005.

Nevertheless, the formation of partnerships between parents and schools focused on academics has an impact on the student achievement (J. L. Epstein, 1995). J. L.

Epstein (1995) goes on to explain the *Theoretical Model of Influence* that explains the six types of parental engagement that contribute to the success of students.

- Parenting – in which schools help families with their parenting skills by providing information on student's developmental stages and offering advice on learning-friendly home environments.
- Communicating – or working to educate families about their children's progress and school services and providing opportunities for parents to communicate with the school.
- Volunteering – which ranges from offering opportunities for parents to visit their children's school to finding ways to recruit and train them to work in the school classroom.
- Learning at home – in which schools and teachers share ideas to promote at-home learning through high expectations and strategies so parents can monitor and help with homework.
- Decision-making – in which schools include families as partners in school organizations, advisory panels, and similar committees.
- Community collaboration – a two-way outreach strategy in which community or business groups are involved in education and schools encourage family participation in the community.

Yet, an effective parental engagement occurs when both parents and schools are committed to the partnership and continuity of the partnership (J. L. Epstein & Sanders, 2000). There are no specific types of parental engagement designated to function at any school, and what might work for one school may not work for another. Therefore,

collaboration between parents and schools is so important to help increase student achievement (J. L. Epstein, 1995).

## Academic Achievement in Alternative Education

In the United States, academic achievement has undergone a drastic change since the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). The Adequate Yearly Progress concept (AYP), a mandate under NCLB, required all states to teach students by applying the same standards of academic achievement. The AYP helped to ensure that the annual measureable growth be met by all public education students (W. C. Bielefeld, Stubblefield, & Templeton, 2009). Due to these expectations, states have adopted higher academic standards that help all students achieve the selected accountability standards. Accordingly, school districts invested more time and money into the alternative education programs. The newer formed programs help support the diverse needs and learning styles of the underperforming students (L. Aron, 2003).

W. C. Bielefeld et al (2009) identified four components from literature that are related to the success of alternative education and are known for their commitment to the youth development principles (a) having a collaborative team that includes administrators, teachers, support staff, students, and parents, (b) students supported through flexible individualized programming with high expectations, (c) instructional staff choose to be part of the program employing positive discipline techniques, and build rapport with the students, and (d) early identification of clear student goals, and research put to practice in areas such as assessments, curriculum, teacher professional trainings, English learner and special education services (L. Aron, 2003). A report by the National Dropout Prevention Center, identified alternative education as one of the most effective

strategies to help with school development and dropout prevention (National Dropout Prevention Center, 2017). Inclusively, M. A. Raywid (2001) identified eight consistently repeating factors in research, on the effectiveness of successful alternative education programs:

- Presence of caring and knowledgeable adults, such as teachers, counselors, principals, caseworkers, and community members.
- Sense of community-feeling of belonging.
- Assets Approach.
- Respect for students.
- High Expectations.
- Multi-dimensional Developmental Curriculum.
- Authentic Connection.
- Support & Sustainability.

Likewise, F. P. Schargel and Smink (2001) also identified eight "consistent" characteristics that successful alternative programs appear to have:

1. Maximum teacher/student ratio of 1:10.
2. Small student base not exceeding 25 students.
3. Clearly stated mission and discipline code.
4. Caring faculty with continual staff development.
5. School staff having high expectations for student achievement.
6. Learning program specific to the student's expectations and learning style.
7. Flexible school schedule with community involvement and support.
8. Total commitment to have each student be a success. (p. 117)

## Students in Alternative Education

The students who attend alternative schools and programs are typically at-risk of educational failure for reasons such as poor grades, truancy, disruptive behavior, pregnancy, or similar factors associated with temporary or permanent withdrawal from school (USDOE, 2014). Students have been labeled "at-risk" a term that negatively affects students more than internal and external factors (Sanders, 2000). Sometimes traditional schools do not meet the learning styles and learning capacities of many students (M. A. Raywid, 2001). The creation of a successful alternative education school is necessary to assist in promoting student success, and supporting the needs of the at-risk students (Pharo, 2012). Every student needs to be given the opportunity to learn and achieve the quality of life that best fits their needs, based on their capacities (F. P. Schargel & Smink, 2004). A team effort between students, parents, school staff, and the community must be established to help ensure a support network, which helps students reach their objectives (W. C. Bielefeld et al., 2009).

In 2012-13, a *Hechinger Report* stated that more than 66,500 students were enrolled in alternative education schools. However, only 22,361 reached graduation, and approximately 12,259 dropped out of school (Jackson, 2015). Inclusively, there are no known records showing how many of the high school graduates continued on to college, and strikingly only ten percent or less of those alternative school graduates were four-year university candidates. Moreover, the state has no instrument that concludes which schools do better than others in serving the alternative education population (Butrymowicz, 2015).

## Staff Perceptions

### Principals

According to Gaustad (1992), the involvement of parents greatly influences the students' academic achievements. Yet, research is limited in secondary alternative education schools (A. Henderson, 1989). A decrease in alcohol use, violence, and antisocial behavior occurred as parental involvement increased (USDE and Department of Justice, 2000). Likewise, one of the most quoted recommendations for school safety improvement was the need for parental involvement (Flannery, 1998). However, Richardson (2001) declares the role of the principal is vital to the success of an effectively developed parent involvement program, and its implementation. The principal is responsible for coordinating, managing, and supporting parent involvement in order for teachers to involve parents successfully (J. Epstein, 1987a). Principals' perceptions on parent involvement is greatly favored, but with limitations. Principals agree parent involvement will increase academic achievement. However, principals believe the problems arise when parents are not able to help at home, whether it is due to work, time, or lack of knowledge (Richardson, 2001).

Principals noted reasons why parents do not visit their children in high school classrooms. Parents do not feel comfortable, because the schools are not very welcoming (Atha, 1998). Likewise, parents fear for embarrassment of their children when visiting the classrooms. Lebahn (1995) suggested that principals believe the decline in parental involvement occurs from school not learning about cultural diversity. Lebahn also states that a nontraditional status affects family involvement in a variety of ways not understood by schools such as not having the resources, time, or knowledge to help.

Furthermore, in a study conducted by Lloyd-Smith (2008) stated that principals showed a stronger belief in building a collaborative team with parents to help ensure positive outcomes on student success. Principal interviews asked how strongly they perceived parent involvement to be necessary, and the following six statements are the ones that generated the strongest and weakest responses:

1. Creating a partnership between the school and parent(s) has a positive impact on student grades.
2. Creating a partnership between the school and parent has a positive impact on student behavior.
3. The school should develop creative ways to overcome barriers when parents do not participate in school events.
4. The primary responsibility to increase parental involvement within a high school lies with classroom teachers.
5. Parental input in the evaluation of teachers is useful.
6. Parents should participate in staff hiring decisions (Lloyd-Smith, 2008).

**Teachers**

The greatest challenge faced by teachers is the ability to communicate and involve parents in the education process. Eighty percent of new teachers firmly believe that parental involvement can be successful if collaboration with parents existed (Jacobson, 2005). Both teachers and parents alike, have perspectives on parent involvement that is greatly shaped by past experiences. Fostering collaborative teams with parents helps break the historical teacher-dominant paradigm and instead requires parents to make the decisions (Comer, 2001). Inclusively, there is a need for a system that recognizes

cultural differences that exist within many communities (Comer, 2001; Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). According to Barge and Loges (2003) perception of teachers on parent involvement falls into four themes:

- Communication – parents staying in contact with teachers and keeping open the line of communication with student. Parents need to ask students questions about how they are doing in school. Teachers believe communication helps instill higher expectations.
- Participation in the students' education and students' life – active participation, such as monitoring academic progress or homework, and knowing their friends.
- Normal parenting duties including supervision – ensure students maintain a healthy lifestyle, practice good nutrition, exhibit proper hygiene, and have access to needed materials for school.
- Discipline supporting consequences administered by the school – help foster respect for authority and responsible behaviors.

T. Wright (2009), states that teachers in all grade levels point out the dire need for the improvement of parent involvement, and better communication between parents and school staff. Inclusively, teachers want reciprocal communication, and want parents to be an equal part of the decision making too. While obstacles to parent involvement exist, teachers are eager to find or create new ways of integrating parent involvement in education in an effort to improve student academic success.

## Synthesis Matrix

A synthesis matrix supports researchers in analyzing and synthesizing literature. It consists of identification of common themes, threads, and patterns (Roberts, 2010). The researcher and thematic dissertation partner, Maria Haro, generated a synthesis matrix (see Appendix A). The synthesis matrix was created to identify the common themes collected on the importance of parent involvement in their children's education. It also helped both researchers consider the factors related to parent engagement, and the history and present-day options of at-risk youth in alternative education. Furthermore, the synthesis matrix helped identify the perception of teachers and principals on actions necessary to include parents in a collaborative process.

## Summary

Chapter II explored the research related to the parent involvement of at-risk students in county community schools. Review of the literature disclosed that the involvement of parents can be a key factor in supporting their child's academic achievement. In addition, parent involvement encourages collaboration with schools to help inspire college attendance and seek success (USDOE, 2014). Based on Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory, students learn from parent behaviors and conversations. It was also concluded that parent involvement in the students' school motivated students to try harder in school (Fan & Chen, 2001; W. H. Jeynes, 2003, 2007). Furthermore, there was indication that parent involvement helps improve academic achievement, absenteeism, and most important helps to form a trusting link between parent and child (L. E. Garcia & Thornton, 2014). The review of literature helped identify the methodology and research design for this study, developed in Chapter III.

# CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

## Overview

Chapter III focuses on the methodology and research design used for this study. A qualitative phenomenological approach was employed to gain a deeper understanding of how engaging parents in alternative education can affect student academic success. This chapter includes a purpose statement, two central questions, a research design, and a description of the population, sample, and instrumentation implemented. In addition, Chapter III includes the procedure used for data collection, data analysis, limitations, and a concluding summary.

## Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand and explain how teachers and principals perceive parent engagement affects high school academic achievement within county operated community schools in Riverside County California. An additional purpose of the study was to understand and explain actions that teachers and principals believe are necessary to increase parent involvement within county operated community schools in Riverside County.

## Research Questions

This study was guided by two central questions. Each central question was divided into sub-questions.

### Central Question 1

Central Question 1 asked: *How do teachers and principals perceive parent engagement affects the academic achievement of high school students within the community schools in Riverside County?*

**Sub-Question 1**. There were three sub-questions designed to answer Central Question 1:

1.1. How do teachers and principals perceive parents are, or are not, involved in supporting their child's academic achievement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County?

1.2. What do teachers and principals perceive influence whether or not parents are engaged with their child's academic achievement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County?

1.3. What supports or barriers do teachers and principals perceive exist that affect parent engagement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County?

**Central Question 2**

Central Question 2 asked: *What do teachers and principals perceive as the actions necessary for the community schools in Riverside County to implement to improve parent engagement to increase high school student achievement?*

**Sub-Question 2**. There were three sub-questions designed to answer Central Question 2:

2.1. What actions do teachers and principals believe the county operated community schools in Riverside County can take to increase parent engagement to improve their child's academic achievement?

2.2 What actions do principals and teachers believe need to be implemented first to increase parent engagement to improve their child's academic

achievement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County?

## Research Design

A qualitative phenomenological design was selected as the methodology for this study. Qualitative research design allows for a more profound understanding of what initiated the lived experience, and the meaning behind the new phenomenon as perceived by the participants (J. H. McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patten, 2012; Patton, 2015). There are four data qualitative inquiry frameworks were considered: ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, and system theory (Patton, 2015).

Phenomenology inquiry was found to be the best fit for examining the teachers and principals' perceptions in connection to the county community schools researched in this study. Phenomenology is the methodological approach that concentrates on the study of consciousness and the matters being experienced directly (J. H. McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Dahlberg, Drew, and Nystrom (2001), state that a phenomenon is anything that presents itself to an individual, or is experienced through intended relationships with other individuals in the world. In addition, the data collection was gathered through a personal in-depth and unstructured interview of the participants (J. H. McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

In-depth interviews consisted of eight questions. This allowed the examination of the principals and teachers' perceptions, based on their lived experiences, of how involving the parents in their children's education make a difference in their academic performance and their behaviors in class. In addition, the phenomenological method guided the identification of actions necessary to increase the parental involvement, and it

provided the researcher with a path to direct the data collection and analysis of interviews from participating teachers and principals.

The following six phases were implemented to collect and analyze data:

1. Phase 1: Planning. The purpose statement and research questions guided the selection of the instrumentation to be used for the interviews, and the process for selecting teachers and principals.
2. Phase 2: Countywide Assessment and Procedures. RCOE's assistant superintendent was presented with the purpose statement and research questions for review and approval by the county board. Once the approval was given, all necessary procedures were followed to select the teachers and principals interviewed.
3. Phase 3: Data Collection Preparation. Contact information on teachers and principals was gathered from county officials. The researcher sent out the selection letters to all selected interviewees. An email was sent out to advise interviewees of the possible interview dates or for them to recommend on their availability schedules. Then, another email followed to clarify the interview appointment.
4. Phase 4: Data Collection. To ensure confidentiality, interviews were recorded and secured with an identification number for each participant. All interviewees were asked to sign consent on the recording, before initiating the interview.

5. Phase 5: Closing Data Collection. After finalization of the last interview a thank you letter accompanied by a Starbuck's gift card was sent out to all participants in appreciation for their participation in this study.
6. Phase 6: Data Analysis and Completion. During this final phase, the data was analyzed and coded. Charts were designed to help record all the trends identified.

The culmination of the six phases described above occurred between January and March of 2018. This study is part of a thematic dissertation written by one of the two participants. This researcher worked in conjunction with another researcher, Maria Haro. Haro's study focused on the perceptions of parents while involved in their children's education at the Riverside County Community Schools, and how engagement affects the students' academic achievement. In contrast, this researcher's study focused on the perceptions of teachers and principals and the need for parent involvement in the county community high schools. The collaboration of both participants facilitated the identification of the appropriate methodology for this thematic dissertation, the collection of references, the development of interview questions, and the selection of phases to collect and analyze the data from the interviewees

## Population

The population is a group of elements such as, individuals, objects, or events that meet the researcher's specific standards and to which results are generalized (J. H. McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). According to Salkind (2014), the population contains all the feasible participants essential to the study. There also exists the possibility of a large population with more specific criteria (Patten, 2012). This study focused on parent

engagement in the county community schools, which is part of the alternative education system in California. The population and target population emerged from the context of the larger system.

Alternative education accommodates students with a different structure and learning philosophy that meet the student needs and learning styles (CDE, 2017). Alternative education schools have the following goals that are outlined in the Education Code Section 58500.

- Maximize student opportunity to develop the positive values of self-reliance, initiative, kindness, spontaneity, resourcefulness, courage, creativity, responsibility, and joy.
- Recognize students' individualized desire to learn that leads to learning.
- Maintain a learning situation that encourages student motivation, time-management, and the ability to follow their interests.
- Maximize the opportunity for teachers, parents, and students to cooperative and develop the learning process and its subject matter. This opportunity must be a continuous, permanent process.
- Maximize the opportunity for students, teachers, and parents to continue to react to the changing world, including, but not limited to, the community in which the school is located.

According to the CDE (2017), there were 75 active county community schools in the 2014-15 school year that served 14,953 students. In the 2015-16 school year there were 74 schools, and served 15,144 students. Furthermore, the 2016-17 school year 71 county community schools served 14,392 students. The county community schools are a

unique population within the alternative education system. The county community schools provide service to alternative education students who are often high risk, expelled from the traditional schools, or referred by probation (CDE, 2017). Teachers and principals in county community schools have experience and training that supports teaching students enrolled.

Currently, California has 58 counties (see Appendix B). Fifty-three of the 58 counties have active county community schools. Comparisons between the 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 school years show the cumulative number of student enrollment, the total expulsions per year, and expulsion rates. Statewide there was a 1% decrease in the cumulative student enrollment between the two school years, with 5,172 students less in the 2016/17 school year. The number of expulsions also had a decrease from 5,701 in 2015/16 to 5,657 in the 2016/17 school year. Likewise, all school enrollments and expulsions for each year decreased in numbers. Education code 48915.1 (b) requires that expelled students be enrolled in an education program. Often these students enroll in one of the many alternative school programs in California run by the local school districts and county offices of education. Alternative schools also enroll students who are having learning or social-emotional issues, are adjudicated youth, or whose parents believe it is a better placement for their child. The state of California collects data for six types of schools broadly identified as alternative schools, including:

- alternative
- community day
- continuation
- county community

- juvenile court
- opportunity

While the term alternative schools generally applies to these six types of schools, districts are allowed to choose the term alternative for schools that are different from the other five established forms of alternative schools. Total number of alternative schools 2016-17 school year was 1035. This represents 10% of the total number of schools in California. The number of alternative schools declined between the 2012-13 and 2016-17 school year.

According to the CDE (2017) in 2016-17 there were 701 active county community schools in California. In the 2013-4 school year and after a growth of 15 community schools from the previous school year, there was a drop in the numbers over the following three years. The 2016-17 school year compared to 2013-14 showed 31% decrease of 22 schools (see Table 6). The decrease in the number of alternative schools and county community schools is unknown. With the change to the Local Control Funding formula model, and the advent of other education reforms in recent years, districts are finding ways of retaining students in the regular school program who may have previously been referred to an alternative school (Sackheim, 2017).

Table 6

*California School Types*

| Schools by Type | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alternative | 254 | 265 | 263 | 261 | 259 |
| Community Day | 258 | 273 | 205 | 193 | 177 |
| Continuation | 479 | 484 | 461 | 452 | 441 |
| County Community | 78 | 93 | 75 | 74 | 71 |
| Elementary | 5,779 | 5,812 | 5,826 | 5,858 | 5,869 |
| High School | 1,324 | 1,357 | 1,337 | 1,339 | 1,313 |
| Junior High | 46 | 47 | 46 | 48 | 48 |
| Juvenile Court | 80 | 88 | 75 | 74 | 67 |
| K-12 | 210 | 229 | 244 | 262 | 325 |
| Middle | 1,274 | 1,302 | 1,301 | 1,298 | 1,300 |
| Opportunity | 34 | 33 | 23 | 21 | 20 |
| Preschool | N/A | N/A | 40 | 10 | 11 |
| Special Education Schools | 136 | 148 | 138 | 134 | 133 |
| State Special Schools | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Youth Authority Facilities | N/A | N/A | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Total | 9,955 | 10,134 | 10,041 | 10,031 | 10,041 |

*Note*. Data sorted alphabetically in ascending order with "Schools by Type" controlling the sort. Adapted from "California School Types," by EdData Education Data Partnerships. Retrieved from https://www.ed-data.org/state/CA

Total student enrollment in county community schools for the 2016-17 school year was 14,392 (CDE, 2017). Students attended schools at 71 county community schools that are active within the 58 California school districts (see Appendix C). Currently, some counties are missing data, including Mono and Trinity Counties. The

top five districts with the most county community school enrollment are San Joaquin, Orange, Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Diego counties.

The number of teachers and principals employed for the 2014-15 school year at 53 of the 58 counties in California are identified in Appendix D. A total of 385 teachers and 76 principals are employed in the 75 county community schools. However, some of the principals cover different sites. Orange County is the county with the most hired teachers and principal, followed by Los Angeles. Inclusively, some counties had no data for the 2014-15 school year.

The population selected for this study consisted of teachers and principals working in the RCOE county community schools. The rationale for selecting this population was that parents have historically lacked involvement in their children's education after being enrolled in the RCOE community schools. Similarly, the community schools have not systematically involved parents in the educational process. RCOE community school teachers and principals have daily contact with students and parents and are likely to have unique perceptions regarding parent engagement. Due to the limited research on county community schools in California, nor the involvement of parents, it is also fundamentally important to identify the actions necessary to increase parental engagement. In addition, on September 8, 2016, the California State Board of Education approved an accountability system, Priority 3, that prioritizes parent engagement (CDE, 2016).

## Target Population

The target population is what defines the elements generalized, and is the whole number of individuals chosen from the population that will help with the research (J. H.

McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The target population selected for this study consists of teachers and principals at seven county community schools and regional learning centers in the RCOE district (see Table 7). The rationale for targeting this population includes:

- The Riverside County Community School System spans the entire Riverside County, serving students from urban, suburban, and rural communities.
- Riverside County is the 4th largest county operated Community School system in California.
- The enrollment in the Riverside County Community schools represents 8% of the total statewide enrollment.
- The Riverside County Community Schools employ a total of 18 teachers and seven principals, which represents approximately 9% of the county community school teachers and principals statewide.
- The target population is within reasonable proximity to the researcher to conduct the interview data collection of county community schools in Riverside County.
- Additionally, the leadership at the RCOE has expressed an interest in increasing parent involvement within the county community schools (see Appendix E).

Table 7

*Riverside County Office of Education Regional Learning Centers/Community Schools*

| Schools | Principals | Teachers | Students |
|---|---|---|---|
| Arlington Regional Learning Center | 1 | 3 | 58 |
| Betty G. Gibbel Regional Learning Center | 1 | 2 | 49 |
| Blythe Community School | 1 | 1 | 11 |
| David L. Long Regional Learning Center | 1 | 3 | 16 |
| Don F. Kenny Regional Learning Center | 1 | 2 | 18 |
| Palm Springs Community School | 1 | 3 | 24 |
| Val Verde Regional Learning Center | 1 | 4 | 95 |
| Total | 7 | 18 | 271 |

*Note.* Adapted from "Riverside County Office of Education Regional Learning Centers/Community Schools, 2019. Retrieved from https://www.rcoe.us/

## Sample

As defined by Salkind (2014), a sample is a subset of the population researched. J. H. McMillan and Schumacher (2009) state that a sample is the identified population from which data is collected, and is related to the nature of the research study. The sample for this study was chosen from the RCOE teachers and principals in the target population. The sample size for this study was 20 participants. The sample size included 13 teachers and seven principals. As stated by Patton (2015) a sample this size is suitable enough to support the phenomena's investigation. In qualitative inquiry, the information richness and the researcher's analytical abilities are more essential than the sample size (J. H. McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

The seven principals and all 18 teachers received an email invitation from the researcher to participate in the study. The invitation consisted of an introduction stating

the intended purpose of the study, the flexibility to withdraw from the study if participant felt the need, the explanation of the protected confidentiality and anonymity, and a thank you for their participation in the study (see Appendix F). Included in the email was an acceptance letter for participation (see Appendix G) for teachers and principals to fill out if they chose to participate. Teachers and principals were asked to scan and return the acceptance letter via email to the researcher.

After receiving the teacher responses of acceptance, a simple random sample determined the thirteen teacher participants. A random number list generator from Random.org was used to select the 13 teacher participants for the study. A simple random sample is a sample that gives equal opportunity to all members selected, according to Patten (2012) and J. H. McMillan and Schumacher (2010). All seven principals indicated their willingness to participate in the study.

## Instrumentation

Instrumentation is the effect of variations in measurement (J. H. McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In formal research, measure is the term used for instrument (Patten, 2012). When collecting data, any changes in the instruments or the person collecting the data can cause a threat to the results (J. H. McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). J. H. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) indicate that the researcher is the primary instrument in the data collection and data analysis, and must be neutral to the data to be collected.

A semi-structured interview guide instrument containing an introduction, five demographic questions, and eight open-ended questions (see Appendix H) was created as a guide for this qualitative phenomenological study. A semi-structured interview allows the researcher to decide the sequence and wording of the questions during the interview

(J. H. McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). A semi-structured interview followed a phenomenological perspective, to help study the results of the lived phenomenon by teachers and principals. A phenomenological interview is an in-depth interview used to study the meaning or essence of a lived experience among selected participants (J. H. McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Helping the interviewees feel comfortable during the interview is also something important for the researcher to consider. Assisting the interviewees in being relaxed will allow the interview to run smoother.

The semi-structured interview was designed to solicit the opinions of teachers and principals based on the purpose and research questions for this study. To assist in developing the instrument and obtain valid data, the researcher considered the types of interview questions shared by J. H. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) (see Table 8).

Table 8

*Types of Interview Questions*

| Type | Description |
|---|---|
| Experience/Behavior | Elicit what a person does or has done through the description of experiences, behaviors, actions, activities |
| Opinions/Values | Elicit what a person thinks about his or her experiences, which can reveal a person's intentions, goals, and values. |
| Feelings | Elicit how the person reacts emotionally to his or her experiences. |
| Knowledge | Elicit information the person has or what the person considers as factual. |
| Sensory | Elicit a person's descriptions of what and how he or she sees, hears, touches, tastes, and smells in the world. |
| Background/Demographic | Elicit a person's description of himself or herself to aid the researcher in identifying and locating the person in relation to other people. |

Together, both the researcher and thematic dissertation partner developed the eight open-ended interview questions (see Appendix I). The questions focused on the common findings from the literature review by both researchers, and the connection to the central questions for this study (see Appendix J). Both appendices show the alignment between the research questions and the factors from the synthesis matrix within the literature review to the interview questions used in this study.

All participants had the opportunity to select what method of interview would best fit their schedules, and their comfort. Three choices were offered, a face-to-face interview, telephone, or a zoom interview which is a videoconferencing platform The researcher was sensitive to the participant's busy agendas, and made sure that participants were given ample time to feel prepared for the individual semi-structured interviews, which are the most used for collecting the qualitative data (Patten, 2012).

## Reliability and Validity

In research, reliability is the consistency that occurs when measuring the results of data from an instrument that is free from error (J. H. McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). If minimal error occurs, then the instrument is considered reliable. Validity is the degree to which the instrument being used measures what it is set to measure, and its performance is what it was designed to do (J. H. McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Both reliability and validity are important to the instrument used in a research study. As stated by J. H. McMillan and Schumacher (2009) and Patten (2012) in order to ensure reliability and validity of the data, two or more independent coders are needed code the data. In this study, the researcher coded the majority of the interview responses. The thematic dissertation partner, Maria Haro, independently coded 10% of the interview responses to

help with the identification of themes and the reliability of the data. Furthermore, both coders' results were compared to help with establishing intercoder reliability and to ensure consistency of the results.

The thematic dissertation partners created the interview questions. The questions were written based on the review of the literature (M. A. Raywid, 1994; Reimer, M., & Cash, T., 2003; J. Ruiz de Velasco et al., 2008; J. Ruiz de Velasco, J., & Gonzales, 2017), and the synthesis matrix. The questions were created to understand and explain the lived experiences of teachers and principals employed in alternative education county community schools. An expert in alternative education, Dr. Diana Walsh-Reuss, Assistant Superintendent for RCOE, reviewed the interview questions to help ensure content validity, and to review if the questions correlated with the synthesis matrix. Dr. Diana Walsh-Reuss oversees alternative education to ensure compliance with the federal and state mandates. Inclusively, Dr. Diana Walsh-Reuss supervises the research and grants written in her department.

To ensure instrument validity, the researcher led a field test of the interview questions (J. H. McMillan & Schumacher, 2006; Roberts, 2010) (see Appendix K). Three participants, two teachers and one administrator who are not participating in the study were interviewed for the field test. Each participant was interviewed using one of the three methods of interview, in person, over the phone, and zoom interview. The participants were first asked the four demographic questions to provide context that tells of their lived experiences. Then they were read the interview guide introduction. The interview questions were asked, and then participants were instructed to fill out the field test survey, following the completion of the interview. The researcher, the thematic

dissertation partner, and a co-worker were present for the field test interview. Both the co-worker and dissertation partner helped with taking notes, and observing the body language of the participant. Inclusively, they both closely observed the participants changes in tones while responding to questions. No modifications were necessary.

**Intercoder Reliability of Data**

At the conclusion of data collection, the researcher transcribes data, codes data, and continues to validate the data. As stated by Patton (2015) intercoder reliability is the process of employing a third-party evaluator. The evaluator helps to analyze, verify, and determine the same conclusion for the data collected. In addition, the researcher provided the thematic researcher with two of the twenty transcribed interviews. At the completion of data verification, the researcher reviewed for intercoder reliability. Tinsley and Weiss (2000) state while reliability could be based on correlational indices, intercoder agreement is needed to content analysis in order to assign a same rating to each object. The process of validating the data with an independent researcher created a level of reliability (Patton, 2015).

**Researcher as an Instrument of the Study**

A researcher is known as the instrument when piloting a qualitative research (Patten, 2012; Patton, 2015). When the researcher is the instrument in a semi-structured qualitative interview, unique researcher characteristics have the potential to influence the collection (Pezalla, Pettigrew, & Miller-Day, 2012). Biases may exist as the result of the researcher influencing the interviewee during the qualitative interview.

The researcher for this study was employed as a teacher at the Riverside County Community School. Inclusively, the researcher brought a potential bias to this study

based on personal experiences while being employed in a setting similar to the one being studied. A qualitative interview was conducted with the research participants using face-to-face, telephone, and zoom interview.

## Data Collection

Qualitative data collection can happen in many forms such as, observations, interviews, or artifact collection (J. H. McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). An interview as defined by Patton, (2015) is an interaction. The data collection process for this study consisted of a semi-structured interview with eight open-ended questions. Semi-structured interviews are the most popular types of measures chosen for collecting qualitative research data, because of the combination of pre-determined open-ended questions with the researcher's flexibility to inquire additional information from the participant responses (Patten, 2012).

Potential teachers and principals at the seven alternative education schools from RCOE were emailed an invitation letter outlining the purpose of the study and the steps to be followed as a participant in the interviews (see Appendix L). Participant email addresses were gathered from the list of RCOE employees. Participants also received information clarifying the means of maintaining confidentiality. They were given an informed consent form (see Appendix M) and the Research Participants Bill of Rights (see Appendix N). As stated by Patton (2015) the privacy of all research participants should be protected. In addition, participants were advised that identification numbers replaced names and school locations. Participants were also informed that only the researcher and the dissertation committee chair had access to the identification numbers.

Following receiving the acceptance letters from all potential participants, and completing the random number process to select the teacher participants, the researcher sent an email containing possible dates and times for scheduling the interviews to all participants. In addition, the participants were asked to choose a preferred method of interview including face-to-face, phone, or zoom interview. The email was sent one month in advance in order to give all participants ample time to decide on the most convenient date, time, and setting for the interview. Inclusively, participants were encouraged to share their availability dates, times, and settings if the previously assigned dates were not convenient.

Once all interviews were scheduled, the researcher sent participants reminder notices two days prior to the scheduled interviews. Before beginning the interview, participants signed an audio consent form (see Appendix O) for the recording of the interviews. The interviews were audio recorded to collect the data using computer transcribing software. The data were transferred to charts using the numbers given to the participants to guarantee confidentiality amongst all participants. All participants were given a code to be identified only by the researcher and dissertation committee chair.

The researcher attained approval from the Brandman University Institutional Review Board (BUIRB) prior to beginning the collection of data. The approval from BUIRB was attained on March 23, 2018. The BUIRB is responsible for reviewing and approving all of Brandman's researcher projects involving human subjects by making sure all ethical and legal practices are followed. However, prior to beginning the project, the researcher must first submit their research project for approval by the Institutional

Review Board (IRB), and then the data collection can begin. The data collection began on May 21, 2018, and concluded on November 16, 2018.

## Data Analysis

The data was collected from seven principals and 13 teachers employed at seven RCOE alternative education county community schools. The researcher applied the inductive analysis approach to help avoid biases when analyzing the data. J. H. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) state that the researcher must first gather the data and then synthesize inductively to be able to generate generalizations. This approach allows the qualitative researcher a new perspective on different points of view (J. H. McMillan & Schumacher (2010).

Interview data was transcribed and analyzed using a software program called NVivo. NVivo is a software program supporting qualitative research, and its job is to help researchers organize and analyze qualitative data (Ltd, 2017). Inclusively, a pre-coded chart was designed to facilitate the uploading of interview responses to NVivo. The data was analyzed and coded based on emerging themes and trends. To help ensure confidentiality, the data was recorded on a chart that only had participant code numbers. After the completion of data analysis and coding occurred, the researcher created another list for emerging themes related to the research questions. An additional list of key words and repetitive phrases was generated to seek redundant key words and phrases. After combining similar themes, codes were designed to help with answering the research questions. The codes were then entered in NVivo as nodes, and frequency charts were designed to help with categorizing data. The themes or codes most frequently found in the data provided insight into the lived experience of the teachers and principals as it

relates to the research questions. The information produced was reviewed, organized, and analyzed by the researcher to determine the finding reported in Chapter IV.

Maria Haro, the thematic dissertation partner independently helped the researcher with the evaluation and 10% of the coding process. This step was taken as a precaution to help ensure the data was recorded, analyzed, and coded appropriately. As stated by J. H. McMillan and Schumacher (2009) having another coder help with the coding process is identified as inter-coder reliability.

## Limitations

Limitations exist in all types of studies (J. H. McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Qualitative phenomenological studies seek to understand the lived experiences and the meaning behind new phenomenon as perceived by the participants (J. H. McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patten, 2012; Patton, 2015). The following limitations were identified in this study.

- The sample size was not extended to other teacher and principals within the Riverside County, and instead was only limited to the teachers and principals employed in RCOE School Districts' county community schools.
- Lack of research on the collection of data from California alternative education high schools.
- Parent engagement in alternative education is minimal to non-existent (Bayne, 2013).
- The assumption of honest responses from the participants.

## Summary

Chapter III informs the reader about the purpose of this study and the research questions. Qualitative phenomenological procedures that were implemented by the researcher were identified. Included are a description of the research design and the formation of the semi-structured interview. Additionally, included as well are the selections of the population, target population, sample, instrumentation, data collection and analysis, as well as the limitations of the study. The findings that resulted from the research methodology described in this chapter are reported in Chapter IV.

# CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

## Overview

Chapter IV examines the lived experiences of teachers and principals employed in Riverside County Community Schools while working with at-risk youth. This chapter also summarizes the results from the data collected from 20 interviews collected through a qualitative phenomenological approach. Chapter IV includes the purpose statement, research questions, methodology, the detailed data collection procedures as well as the population and sample for this study. Additionally, the results of the data analysis and findings for each of the central and sub-questions are presented.

## Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand and explain how teachers and principals perceive parent engagement affects high school academic achievement within county operated community schools in Riverside County California. An additional purpose of the study was to understand and explain actions that teachers and principals believe are necessary to increase parent engagement within county operated community schools in Riverside County.

## Research Questions

This study was guided by two central questions. The central questions were divided into sub-questions:

### Central Question 1

Central Question 1 asked: *How do teachers and principals perceive parent engagement affects the academic achievement of high school students within the community schools in Riverside County?*

**Sub-Question 1**. There were three sub-questions designed to answer Central Question 1:

1.1. How do teachers and principals perceive parents are, or are not, involved in supporting their child's academic achievement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County?

1.2. What do teachers and principals perceive influence whether or not parents are engaged with their child's academic achievement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County?

1.3. What supports or barriers do teachers and principals perceive exist that affect parent engagement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County?

**Central Question 2**

Central Question 2 asked: *What do teachers and principals perceive as the actions necessary for the community schools in Riverside County to implement to improve parent engagement to increase high school student achievement?*

**Sub-Question 2**. There were three sub-questions designed to answer Central Question 2:

2.1. What actions do teachers and principals believe the county operated community schools in Riverside County can take to increase parent engagement to improve their child's academic achievement?

2.2 What actions do principals and teachers believe need to be implemented first to increase parent engagement to improve their child's academic

achievement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County?

## Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

The aim of this study was to understand and explain the perceptions of teachers and principals employed in Riverside County Community Schools and how parent engagement affects the academic achievement of students. A qualitative phenomenological methodology was employed for this study. The methodology utilized structured interviews of the participants, which allowed the researcher to examine the lived experiences of teachers and principals working with the at-risk youth in the community schools.

The researcher held 20 interviews with 13 teachers and seven principals identified as RCOE employees. All seven RCOE community school principals were selected for the interview; however, 18 teachers were placed on a random number list generator from Random.org for the selection of the 13 teachers to be interviewed. Locations, times, and dates were confirmed with the participants and were conducted during August through December 2018. Eight interviews were conducted face to face, and 10 were conducted over the telephone. All participants were emailed the interview guide containing the questionnaire with the four demographic questions and eight interview questions in advance of the interview. In addition, all participants were also emailed the informed consent and the video/audio consent form. Two electronic devices were used to record the interviews, and notes were also taken throughout the interview process. Transcription of the interview was done using Go-transcribe, an online automated transcription service. This process took place right after the interview recordings and the coding of the

collected data was completed by the researcher. NVivo was used to identify the frequent themes in the data. Subsequently, the emerging codes were correlated to the research questions that supported the findings of the study. Intercoder reliability was also employed to assure being biased. The thematic dissertation partner, Maria Haro, independently coded 10% of data (J. H. McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

## Population

This study focused on parent engagement in the county community schools, which is part of the alternative education system in California. The population and target population emerged from the context of the larger system. Alternative education accommodates students with a different structure and learning philosophy that meet the student needs and learning styles (CDE, 2017).

Total student enrollment in county community schools for the 2016-17 school year was 14,392 (CDE, 2017). Students attended schools at 71 county community schools that are active within the 58 California school districts. Currently, some counties are missing data, including Mono and Trinity Counties. The top five districts with the most county community school enrollment are San Joaquin, Orange, Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Diego counties.

The number of teachers and principals employed for the 2014-15 school year at 53 of the 58 counties in California are listed. A total of 385 teachers and 76 principals are employed in the Riverside County Community Schools. However, some of the principals cover different sites. Orange County is the county with the most hired teachers and principals, followed by Los Angeles. Inclusively, some counties had no data for the 2014-15 school year.

The population selected for this study consisted of teachers and principals working in the RCOE County Community Schools. The rationale for selecting this population was that parents have historically lacked involvement in their children's education after being enrolled in the RCOE community schools. Similarly, the community schools have not systematically involved parents in the educational process. RCOE community school teachers and principals have daily contact with students and parents and are likely to have unique perceptions regarding parent engagement. Due to the limited research on county community schools in California, nor the involvement of parents, it is also fundamentally important to identify the actions necessary to increase parental engagement.

## Sample

The sample for this study was chosen from the RCOE teachers and principals in the target population. The sample size for this study was 20 participants. The size included 13 teachers and seven principals. As stated by Patton (2015) a sample this size is suitable enough to support the phenomena's investigation. In qualitative inquiry, the information richness and the researcher's analytical abilities are more essential than the sample size (J. H. McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

## Demographic Data

Immediately preceding the interview, the 20 participants were asked four demographic questions. The four demographic questions:

1. How many years of experience do you have in education?
2. How many years of experience do you have in alternative education?
3. How many years have you been employed in RCOE?

4. What is your current position? The demographic information was utilized to understand the participants' backgrounds, which provided a context for the study.

Analysis of the demographic data for teachers (see Table 9), revealed that 70% of the 13 participating county community school teachers were Specialized Academic Instruction (SAI) teachers, 15% were CTE teachers, 15% were physical education teachers. For the 13 participating teachers, it was found that the average years employed in education was 19 years. Thirty-eight percent of the 13 teachers have been working in education for 10 or more years. When asked how many years teachers were employed in alternative education, data revealed that out of the 13 participating teachers an average of 10 years were invested in alternative education. The teacher with the highest number of years employed in alternative education is 25 years. And, the average for the participating teachers employed in RCOE is 8.7 years. Inclusively, data revealed that 62% of the teachers have been working in RCOE for less than 10 years.

Table 9

*Demographics for Sample on Teachers*

| Participant Number | Experience in Education | Experience in Alternative Education | Employed in RCOE | Current Position |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | 4 years | 4 years | 4 years | P.E. Teacher |
| 13 | 8 years | 8 years | 8 years | SAI Teacher |
| 18 | 9 years | 7 years | 4 years | SAI Teacher |
| 6 | 15 years | 5 years | 4 years | CTE Teacher |
| 15 | 15 years | 7 years | 12 years | SAI Teacher |
| 4 | 17 years | 8 years | 11 years | CTE Teacher |
| 12 | 18 years | 8 years | 8 years | SAI Teacher |
| 17 | 18 years | 13 years | 13 years | SAI Teacher |
| 2 | 20 years | 1 year | 1 year | SAI Teacher |
| 19 | 20 years | 20 years | 20 years | SAI Teacher |
| 16 | 25 years | 25 years | 25 years | SAI Teacher |
| 1 | 30 years | 3.5 years | 2 years | P.E. Teacher |
| 5 | 43 years | 20 years | 1 year | SAI Teacher |

An analysis of the demographic data for county community school principals (see Table 10), indicates that 100% of the principals interviewed have been employed in education for over 15 years, with an average of 22.8 years for all seven. The principal with most years invested in education is 32 years. Five of the seven principals have nine or less years of experience in working with the alternative education programs. The principal with the most years of experience in alternative education has dedicated 22 years to the program, and for all seven there is an average of 8.7 years. The average years of employment in RCOE for all seven principals is 5.7 years, with 57% having been employed with RCOE for only two years. The principal with most years worked in RCOE is 15 years.

Table 10

*Demographics for Sample on Principals*

| Participant Number | Experience in Education | Experience in Alt Ed | Employed in RCOE | Current Position |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | 15 years | 2 years | 2 years | Principal |
| 10 | 15 years | 9 years | 2 years | Principal |
| 20 | 21 years | 11 years | 15 years | Principal |
| 11 | 22 years | 2 years | 2 years | Principal |
| 9 | 26 years | 22 years | 12 years | Principal |
| 14 | 29 years | 6 years | 2 years | Principal |
| 7 | 32 years | 9 years | 5 years | Principal |

*Note.* Alt Ed = Alternative Education; ROCE = Riverside County Office of Education.

Demographic data for 13 teachers and seven principals was combined (see Table 11). The review of data shows that the average number of years employed in education for teachers was 19 years, and for principals 23 years. When both teachers and principals were combined, there was an average of 20 years invested in education. An average for both principals and teachers having worked in alternative education is 9.5 years. Thirteen teacher participants averaged 10 years of employment in alternative education while the seven principals averaged nine years. Teachers and principals were also asked how many years they had been employed with RCOE. The average years of employment with RCOE for teachers was nine years, and principals six years. When combined, both teachers and principals averaged eight years of being employed in RCOE.

Table 11

*Demographic Characteristics of Teachers and Principals*

| Demographic Characteristics | Teachers | Principals | Combined |
|---|---|---|---|
| Number of Participants | 13 | 7 | 20 |
| Average number of years in education | 19 | 23 | 20 |
| Average number of years in Alt. Ed. | 10 | 9 | 9.5 |
| Average number of years employed in RCOE | 9 | 6 | 8 |

## Presentation and Analysis of Data

The data collected for this study was organized, evaluated, and analyzed in relationship to the two central research questions and five sub-questions in May through November, 2018. The interviews were recorded after acceptance letters, consent form, and audio/video consent form were signed. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather the data from 13 teachers and seven principals employed in RCOE. The interviews were transcribed and once verified by researcher and thematic dissertation partner, the data was scanned for the identification of the themes. The formal coding process began once the researcher uploaded the data themes into NVivo a data computerized data program that addresses the common themes and emergent themes from the analysis of all research questions. The researcher determined that the themes with the most references would be applied to the study. Furthermore, the themes were divided by teacher and principal responses, percent of participant agreement, and frequency of responses.

A review of the Table 12 shows two very strong themes, with 85% of the respondents agreeing to Theme 5 - Parent disinterest in collaborating with schools

becomes a barrier for student academic performance, and Theme 14 - Sustained positive parent encouragement needs improvement to gain parent collaboration and involvement in their children's' education. Theme 14 had the highest frequency of responses, 63 responses, with Theme 5 having the third highest frequency of 33 responses. Theme 3 was also considered by the researcher to be very strong with 38 responses from 80% of the respondents agreeing that the frequency of parent involvement affects the student motivation to stay engaged in their education. Themes 11, 12, and 13 all had 15 participants agree, which were judged to be strong themes to emerge from the data. Theme 1, also was considered a strong finding with 14 participants giving 33 responses. The other themes were regarded as important findings, as they had between 8-11 responses and frequencies ranging from 10-17 responses.

Table 12

*Themes, Interview Sources, Percent of Participant Agreement and Frequency*

| Themes | Interview Sources | Percent of Participant Agreement | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The lack of communication between parents and schools creates unwelcoming environments. | 14 | 70% | 33 |
| 2. Parents' lack the knowledge to support the student learning of academic concepts. | 8 | 40% | 11 |
| 3. Frequency of parent involvement affects the student motivation to stay engaged in their education. | 16 | 80% | 38 |
| 4. The negative perception of school program causes parent non-involvement. | 9 | 45% | 20 |
| 5. Parent disinterest in collaborating with schools becomes a barrier for student academic performance. | 17 | 85% | 20 |

(continued)

Table 12

*Themes, Interview Sources, Percent of Participant Agreement & Frequency*

| Themes | Interview Sources | Percent of Participant Agreement | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| 6. Embarrassment of student behaviors keeps parents from becoming involved in their children's education. | 10 | 50% | 14 |
| 7. Parents are burned-out from all the problems arising from their children's behaviors. | 8 | 40% | 14 |
| 8. Transportation is a significant barrier that prevents parents from becoming involved in their children's education. | 11 | 55% | 17 |
| 9. Due to time constraints, parents are not as involved as possible to support their children's education. | 10 | 50% | 15 |
| 10. Language barriers are a major cause for the lack of parental involvement in education. | 9 | 45% | 10 |
| 11. More empathy towards parent needs would improve parent involvement and increase student academic success. | 15 | 75% | 22 |
| 12. Parents need to be informed and educated on their rights or entitlements. | 15 | 75% | 37 |
| 13. Parenting classes are essential to enhancing parenting skills necessary to help improve student support in school. | 15 | 75% | 41 |
| 14. Sustained positive parent encouragement needs improvement to gain parent collaboration and involvement in their children's education. | 17 | 85% | 63 |
| 15. Educating parents in the alternative education program will reduce the stigma of bad students. | 8 | 40% | 14 |

**Central Research Question 1**

Central Research Question 1 asked: *How do teachers and principals perceive parent engagement affects the academic achievement of high school students within the community schools in Riverside County?* There were two findings that emerged from the analysis of data.

**Theme 1: The lack of communication between parents and schools creates unwelcoming environments**. Data shows this theme to be strong, with 70% agreement, representing 14 of the participants in the sample. When interviewed, 14 participants responded that they have concerns with the communication that exists between RCOE community schools and the parents/guardians of RCOE community school students. A review of the data from both groups (see Table 13) shows teachers with 100% agreement and only one principal mentioning this theme.

Table 13

*Frequency of Theme 1 Responses*

| Teachers | Percent of Teachers | Frequency | Principals | Percent of Principals | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13 | 100 | 28 | 1 | 14 | 5 |

***Teachers***.

Participant 2 believes,

I think it is like I said, You just set that welcoming atmosphere for parents. You know they play such an important role in education, but I don't think they are aware of that. I think if we just do a better job of communicating to them how important they really are, they would be more involved in their children's education. Their involvement would then inspire the students to perform better in

school. You know maybe we could do all this during the different meetings that we have, like the school site council or ELAC.

Participant 13 shared an example from their school site,

> Communication and transportation are the most significant barriers that impede parents from collaborating or even visiting our school sites. When we work with those parents to get a bus ticket, or if we must go pick them up for a day or get them some ride to school the deputy drives out to get them. By us making that positive gesture towards them, I see that open line of communication that should be improved at all sites. We have seen parents are more willing to encourage their student to get to school somehow, some way or ask for help from other people.

Participant 16 shared an idea to be shared in the classroom,

> I believe students can and will perform better if there is a better form of communication between the schools and their parents. It just goes back to the open communication about, you know letting them know they are important and what their students are doing at school. I am trying to set up this process that is easy to understand. I will communicate to parents what we are doing every week and let them know they can count on the assignments to show up on the Aeries grade book. A more open line of communication and making parents aware of the significance they make in their students' academic performance was a major concern for the participants. Participants expressed the need to improve the ways school sites communicate with parents in order to invite them to become more involved.

***Principal***.

Participant 10 stated,

> I think this school needs to do a better job communicating that we are here for the whole family. Too often parents perceive this as just a place where they drop off their student then drive back to pick them up. We need to have more of an outreach to say, 'What can we do for you?' I still do not understand why, because we do have connections, and other resources to offer them.

***Similarities and differences between teachers and principals***. Only one principal out of the 7 agreed with the 13 teachers that the lack of communication creates an unwelcoming environment. Six principals did not agree with the teachers. One hundred percent of teacher participants agreed on the need for better communication. Furthermore, teachers had unanimous agreement and a frequency of 28 responses.

**Theme 2: Parents lack the knowledge to support the student learning of academic concepts**. Thirty-eight percent of teachers and 43% of principals in this study, representing 40% of the sample, agreed that many of the parents, lack knowledge to help support their students, and the frequency of responses was 11 (see Table 14). Five teachers and three principals stated their concerns on the lack of parent knowledge to support students.

Table 14

*Frequency of Theme 2 Responses*

| Teachers | Percent of Teachers | Frequency | Principals | Percent of Principals | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 38 | 7 | 3 | 43 | 4 |

***Teachers.***

Participant 15 stated,

> It's the knowledge of the work we are giving the kids and the parents' level of education, because as a teacher I have seen the expectations change myself even with my own 8-year-old's homework. I am not even saying you must be in college to do that. It's just the expectations have changed, and some things are confusing right then. This is just an opinion, but I think parents are embarrassed from their lack of knowledge, and the child's behaviors and actions. I believe they are afraid to be shamed.

Participant 17 shared,

> Most of the parents do not participate in their children's education, because most of them are not educated. Now we are talking about the socio-economic problems of our children, because more often if the child is gone beyond a grade, this child could probably have more education than the parent. How do we help them? There is very little parent participation, because you cannot ask a parent to help the kid when they are under-educated themselves.

Participant 1 further mentioned,

> Some schools have done it, but parents should be offered classes in the evening that increase their ability to work with their student's child's homework. Even though they don't know math, or they don't know English, whatever, an example is that we have parents that have come in and they don't know math, they learn how to do one math problem, one algebraic math problem. Then their challenge is to help the student. Subsequently, the teacher gives that one problem to the

> students as a homework assignment and they bring it home and then the parent helps the student and now the student knows how to solve the problem. A successful moment is created at home, and suddenly, the student is like, 'Dang, Mom!' 'Alright!' Then the parent's total self-esteem game is raised. The engagement is connected more, and then reciprocates when the mom is wanting to learn another math problem creating a moment in which they both are learning. RCOE should also offer for parents in terms of engagement, a simple certificate program.

Participants described the importance of assisting the parents to have the knowledge to help their students' through RCOE led classes or trainings. In addition, participants shared their own ideas of examples that can be a success if parents are given the opportunity to also learn.

***Principals.***

Participant 7 said,

> Students served in RCOE, the parents don't have high attainment of academic achievement and something should be done to support the parents as well. I think that lack of education is a barrier and so they're intimidated by educators. Helping the parents will help improve their support and involvement in their students' education.

Inclusively, participant 1 said, "Most of my parents are, you know, I would say challenged themselves. And those parents, I believe would also benefit from some classes themselves."

***Similarities and differences between teachers and principals***. A review of data for this theme revealed that 40% of the participants were in agreement. Thirty-eight percent of the 13 teachers responded that parents are not knowledgeable enough to support their children's academic learning. And, 43% of the principals agreed with the five teachers, with a frequency of 11 responses.

**Sub-question 1.1**. Sub-Question 1.1 asked: *How do teachers and principals perceive parents are, or are not, involved in supporting their child's academic achievement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County*? Data analyzed and coded revealed two findings for this theme.

***Theme 3: Frequency of parent involvement affects the student motivation to stay engaged in their education*.** Sixteen participants, representing 80% of the sample, responded that the need for parent presence is integral to the students' academic performance (see Table 15). In addition, participants indicated that parents need to take on their own responsibility for being involved in their child's education.

Table 15

*Frequency of Theme 3 Responses*

| Teachers | Percent of Teachers | Frequency | Principals | Percent of Principals | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 | 77 | 32 | 6 | 86 | 6 |

*Teacher*.

Participant 18 said,

> I don't think that parents have the urge to be more involved. Parents need to take ownership. I feel like parents want the school to take more responsibility from them. I mean just like saying, for lack of a better term. It's like pulling teeth to

get parents to show up at some IEP meetings. I mean right? They don't want the responsibility.

*Principal*.

Participant 20 indicated,

> Sometimes parents get caught up in their own life, or their own work and they assume teachers are going to take care of that aspect. The aspect of their child's education. But, in order for students to be truly successful, parents need to get involved, ask questions, and come to the meeting. Parents need to actively participate. They need to be somebody that is going to steer staff at the school and the direction they want to see their kids. Parents need to show their kids that they care, and can do it by being more involved in their education. Parents are always invited, but they just do not show up.

*Similarities and differences between teachers and principals*. Seventy-seven percent of the teachers stated that parent involvement is a major indicator for students to maintain the motivation necessary to stay engaged with their school work. The frequency of the responses for 10 teachers was 32, while the frequency of principal responses was only six from the six principal respondents. There is an approximate ratio of 3:1 in frequency of responses for teachers, and 1:1 ratio for principals, which indicates that this finding is important to both groups, but is of primary concern to most of the teacher participants.

***Theme 4: The negative perception of school program causes parent non-involvement.*** Forty-five percent of the participants, representing nine participants in the sample, stated that parents exhibit a negative perception of the school program.

The nine participants, 54% of teachers and 29% of principals had a frequency of 20 responses on parents feeling shamed about their child attending a community school setting (see Table 16).

Table 16

*Frequency of Theme 4 Responses*

| Teachers | Percent of Teachers | Frequency | Principals | Percent of Principals | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | 54 | 17 | 2 | 29% | 3 |

*Teacher*.

Participant 13 indicated,

> Parents do not show up or visit because, their children attending this school in general for them has such a negative impact already. When a student gets to us, parents are so afraid to even know what's going on because, they have only had a bad history of engagement with the school. We need to educate the parents what alternative education really is at our schools.

*Principals*.

Participant 10 indicated,

> Parents view our schools as a punishment. When we accept their child, many parents cry because their child is going in there. A lot of it is because of their misperception of what the school really is. Other times, I think parents have been conditioned to be used to their children failing academically which is usually result of behavior. I think there is a huge disconnect and it's something that we need to work on. We need to get them to actively participate from a much

younger age and their children's education. The trouble is getting them to show up to the school.

Participant 14 shared their school's experience with new parents.

> There are parents who come you know and again this [Community School] had a history of being in a whole different type of setting than it is now. This year as you know we were at a new site and over time the sites become better and better equipped and fully basically set up. The parents a lot of times were surprised and say, 'Wow this is really nice!' Parents are surprised that they are welcomed to come. And, yes there is a lot of them. You know the less they are involved with us, the less they know about what a positive place it is. So, the parents who do visit us say, 'Oh, you know this is actually a real school.'

*Similarities and Differences between teachers and principals*. Fifty-four percent of the teacher responses revealed that the negative parent perception of alternative school programs is the reason why parents do not want to be involved. Forty-five percent of participants, two out of seven principals agreed with the seven teachers on this theme considered important, with a frequency of 20 responses.

**Sub-question 1.2**. Sub-Question 1.2 asked: *What do teachers and principals perceive influence whether or not parents are engaged with their child's academic achievement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County?* Three findings were found for this theme after the data was analyzed.

***Theme 5: Parent disinterest in collaborating with schools becomes a barrier for student academic performance.*** Seventeen participants, representing 85% of the sample, replied that parents are disconnected and disinterested in being involved

with their child's education. The participants indicated that some parents do not want to be bothered with any form of communication, nor do they feel the need to visit the school (see Table 17).

Table 17

*Frequency of Theme 5 Responses*

| Teachers | Percentage of Teachers | Frequency | Principals | Percentage of Principals | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 | 77 | 11 | 7 | 100 | 9 |

*Teachers*.

Participant 13 expressed their school's concerns,

> Parents are mostly seen when we are outside, and they come to pick up the kids. A minimal percentage of the parents will sometimes roll down the window and ask, 'Hey how's it going?' Occasionally, parents will ask if the student has homework that night or if they can do it over the weekend. I noticed that the more we go out to them the more comfortable they feel discussing their stuff like that with us. However, we have more of the parents that do not even answer phone calls or return messages. We have to come up with something that will build the interest in parents to show up and become more involved in their children's education.

Participant 8 stated,

> When you meet some parents, you can kind of get that impression that they are not going to be present in their child's education. I believe there is no scientific cut way to get them to the schools. Sometimes when I am talking to them, they are disinterested from the beginning, or they begin making excuses why they

> cannot be there. I can tell a difference when parents are really interested in listening to you and they show their concerns for the child. Other times just the way they speak, or pose their questions, you can tell if they're interested or if they just want the kid to move on with their life.
>
> *Principal*.

Participant 7 stated,

> A lot of parents will ignore our phone calls because they can see where the call is coming from and they do not want you to know. The parents that are receptive on the phone, I know I can count on them to stay involved with the child and their work in any day.

*Similarities and Differences between teachers and principals*. A review of data shows this as a very strong theme, with 85% of participant agreement, and a frequency of 20 responses. Ten teachers out of the 13 responded that there is a disinterest from the parents in collaborating with schools, making it a barrier for student achievement. All seven principals were in agreement with the 10 teachers.

***Theme 6: Embarrassment of student behaviors keeps parents from becoming involved in their children's education.*** Ten participants, representing 50% of the sample, believe that parents are embarrassed for many reasons, and believe this explains why they are not involved. Eight teachers and only two principals were in agreement (see Table 18).

Table 18

*Frequency of Theme 6 Responses*

| Teachers | Percent of Teachers | Frequency | Principals | Percent of Principals | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | 62 | 11 | 2 | 29 | 3 |

*Teacher*.

Participant 16 said, “I think that our parents are probably in a lot of ways just embarrassed of their kids’ behavior.” Likewise Teacher Participant 13 quoted a parent “I actually am afraid to answer the phone because I don't want to hear one more negative thing about my kids.”

Participant 4 indicated,

> I sense that sometimes parents do not want to come because of a few reasons. When they visit a class that is reading, writing, or working on math, they feel intimidated. Sometimes parents don't have the education, or they feel threatened, intimidated, or whatever you want to call it and they don't want to come. Yet, another reason they are not much involved is, because they are embarrassed of their children’s behaviors, their low academic performance, and the simple reason for being registered at a community school.

*Principal*.

Participant 10 indicated,

> I think their children's discipline and behavior embarrasses them. Sometimes they would just rather not deal with it. It is something like an ostrich burying their head in the sand. I believe parents are embarrassed, and they don't know what else to do. They have just reached the end of the rope.

*Similarities and Differences between teachers and principals*. Fifty percent of participants concurred with this theme, with a frequency of 14 responses. A total of eight out of the 13 participating teachers shared that parents are embarrassed of their children's' behaviors and is the reason why they do not want to be involved. Only two out of the seven principals believe that embarrassment is the reason for parent non-involvement.

***Theme 7: Parents are burned-out from all the problems arising from their children's' behaviors.*** Eight participants, representing 40% of the sample, stated that parents are burned out from all the issues arising from their children's behavior and having to attend community schools (see Table 19).

Table 19

*Frequency of Theme 7 Responses*

| Teachers | Percent of Teachers | Frequency | Principals | Percent of Principals | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 38 | 9 | 3 | 43 | 5 |

*Teacher*.

Participant 12 indicated,

> Oftentimes parents are exhausted by the time they get to us, [Community School] they've already gone through meetings with the main board meetings, and with counselors. Parents have gone through so much that they take an 'I am done' attitude. You know alternative education schools are their last step. So, it's just a matter of saying, 'No let's look at this a different way. Maybe we can stop this from going any further into the jail system, juvenile hall, or things like that.' You know getting them to see this is more of an opportunity rather than just another

punishment that is being singled out, and that becoming involved will help their student's education.

*Principals*.

Participant 14 stated,

> Once in a while you get a parent in a conference that is so stressed out, they will literally blurt out 'I am just so sick of it.' In addition, participant 13 shared an example of how parents are so tired of the continual negative student behaviors that when they receive a positive phone call they are in disbelief. The parent stated, 'I have never received a positive phone call for my kid.'

Participant 7 further stated,

> Alternative education is a little more of a struggle to get parent involvement. I would just say that because parents have struggled, a lot of them are just fed up with the whole 'don't call me anymore.' Parents share they are sick of meetings with their kid, because they have been doing this for years. They are burned out and are tied up with their kids' bad behavior by the time they get to us, it is what deters their involvement. It is a real ongoing problem. The first phone call they receive is about their child's behavior, and by the time they get here to our schools they are frustrated. Either they want us to think that, or they want us to be able to fix their kid.

*Similarities and Differences between teachers and principals*. A review of this theme shows 40% of participant agreement and is regarded as important, with a frequency of 14 responses. Five teachers and 3 principals coincided on the topic of parental burn-out resulting from all the problems in which their children are involved.

Despite the low number of participants who shared this issue in the interviews, the perceived burn-out among the parents by the staff, was an unanticipated response that provides insight on what hinders some parent's involvement.

**Sub-question 1.3.** Sub-Question 1.3 asked: *What supports or barriers do teachers and principals perceive exist that affect parent engagement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County?* Three findings were also found for this theme after the data was analyzed.

***Theme 8: Transportation is a significant barrier that prevents parents from becoming involved in their children's education.*** When asked about barriers that affect parent engagement, eleven participants, representing 55% of the sample, identified transportation as the most significant of all barriers (see Table 20). They indicated that many students travel a long distance to the designated schools, and this can become a bigger issue as sometimes their financial situation often does not allow for spending more on fuel. In addition, other parents have a greater issue, since they do not own or have access to a car.

Table 20

*Frequency of Theme 8 Responses*

| Teachers | Percent of Teachers | Frequency | Principals | Percent of Principals | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | 46 | 9 | 5 | 71 | 8 |

*Teachers*.

Participant 19 indicated, "Socioeconomic status and diversion are big indicators of transportations barriers for many parents. Economical situations, because they do not have cars. Some of our kids are homeless and parents cannot find their way over here." Participant 12 stated,

> Not having the financial means to provide transportation for the students to and from the schools is an issue that abounds with our parents. You know because we live in this area public transportation is not easy with the heat and sometimes having to travel with little kids.

Participant 15 further stated,

> Transportation is an issue all the way around whether it is for tutoring, getting the kids to school, getting a parent to come to the school. So, we have a big transportation issue and all we have is city buses.

*Principal*.

Participant 14's response resonates with the other participants' responses:

> Transportation is a huge issue. That is definitely one of the problems that was eye opening for me in my first year employed in RCOE. Another thing needing to be mentioned too is poverty. There were definitely families that were living in poverty. Parents could not afford the bus, and many of them do not have cars.

*Similarities and differences between teachers and principals*. When comparing the number of responses, 71% of principals indicated transportation is an important issue, with 46% of the teachers stating it as a concern. The Principals are tasked with maintaining the average daily attendance at school, and interact with parents when the

students are not in school. Their interaction with parents who lack transportation occurred more often than teachers, which was reflected in the responses.

***Theme 9: Due to time constraints, parents are not as involved as possible to support their children's education.*** Ten participants, representing 50% of the sample, indicated that time is a barrier that keeps parents from becoming involved in their children's education (see Table 21). Some parents work two and three jobs, and other parents work late jobs that keep them from becoming involved.

Table 21

*Frequency of Theme 9 Responses*

| Teachers | Percent of Teachers | Frequency | Principals | Percent of Principals | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | 54 | 9 | 3 | 43 | 6 |

*Teacher*.

Participant 12 stated,

> I think a significant barrier is time and especially with our kids. You know parents only come to school when their kids have been punished. I think another huge factor is helping them get over the exhaustion of the process of bringing them back to school every time their child does something wrong. We need to try to help them through that situation and let them see that no, we are team players. Parents need to understand that we are trying to help them to get their children to be positive members of society, and we are not the bad guy. We're actually trying to be part of the team to make some changes to make their life easier.

*Principal*.

Participant 9 indicated,

> The majority of the times when we invite parents, they do not attend school functions because they have the full-time jobs, or they just don't want to get involved in their children's education. They just simply don't want to. All because their priority is their job, and they do not send their children to school. They would rather go to work than come to the school function.

*Similarities and Differences between teachers and principals*. Fifty-four percent of the teachers and 43% of the principals indicated that time constraints affected parent involvement. Combined, 50% of the respondents agreed that this issue has affected parent engagement in the community schools.

***Theme 10: Language barriers are a major cause for the lack of parental involvement in education.*** Nine participants, representing 45% of the sample, stated that language is also a major barrier that impedes parent involvement (see Table 22). Those participants shared that some parents do not speak English, and therefore, they do not show up to school functions. Three teachers, Participants 4 and 6 and 1, stated that language is a huge barrier for them as a high percentage of their parents are Spanish speaking only. Further, the teachers do not speak Spanish. They indicated that some of the school sites do not have Spanish speaking staff available, and sometimes have to rely on the assistance of students to translate.

Table 22

*Frequency of Theme 10 Responses*

| Teachers | Percent of Teachers | Frequency | Principals | Percent of Principals | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 38 | 6 | 4 | 57 | 4 |

*Teacher*.

Participant 17 indicated,

> A comfort level needs to be established between the teacher or principal and the parent. A comfort means that parents should be able to communicate with staff. The foremost barrier is language, because I do not speak Spanish. We have Spanish speaking staff on site, but parents sometimes do not show up to the school events or meetings for this reason.

Participant 19 shared,

> There is a language barrier that affects parent participation in many of our schools functions, because they feel embarrassed they might not be able to communicate with us. Some of our sites do not have staff that can translate, and a high percentage, in some schools about 90% of parents are Spanish speaking only.

*Principal*.

Participant 3 stated,

> We have parents who do not know the language. Therefore, they don't really want to be involved, because they think they cannot help their children with school work. I have had lots of Spanish speaking parents who have really persevered, and we have gotten translators to help out. Sometimes parents are not aware of their own capacities, even when they do not know English.

*Similarities and Differences between teachers and principals*. Data analysis revealed that only five out of 13 teachers concluded that lack of parent involvement is due to the language barrier. Four out of the seven principals, agreed that parents are not as involved, because they do not speak English. Yet, the frequency of responses were almost a 1:1 ratio in between the teachers and principals who responded, indicating relative agreement on this finding.

**Central Research Question 2**

Central Research Question asked: *What do teachers and principals perceive as the actions necessary for the community schools in Riverside County to implement to improve parent engagement to increase high school student achievement?* A total of two findings emerged from this theme.

**Theme 11: More empathy towards parent needs would improve parent involvement and increase student academic success.** Fifteen participants, representing 75% of the sample, responded that there exists a lack of empathy for parents that extends from some teachers or principals (see Table 23). Participants believe that parents need to be understood, because many of them are going through tough circumstances.

Table 23

*Frequency of Theme 11 Responses*

| Teachers | Percent of Teachers | Frequency | Principals | Percent of Principals | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11 | 85 | 15 | 4 | 57 | 7 |

***Teachers***.

Participant 1 said, “I think there is lack of empathy on the district's part to understand who it is that is raising that child.” Participant 19 shared,

> We need a better understanding of who we are dealing with so when a parent comes in with a concern or complaint, we don't turn up our faces and let them know that we understand. It is important to know about these different cultures, so that parents feel that connection. Again, you know a lot of this is, America is a big culture shock.

Participant 2 stated,

> Whether they come in for something disciplinary, an IEP, or whenever they are in the classroom, I make it a point to go up and introduce myself and let them know who I am and what I am here for. I believe this behavior creates a welcoming atmosphere. Whether parents have any questions regarding academic, or maybe social skills that the kids might need, they can feel comfortable talking to me

Participant 1 further mentioned,

> Parents would like to see that the schools care more for the individual students’ lives. There should be more caring, not just academic progress, but their individual lives. Students face many challenges outside of school. Alternative Education you know the teachers are counselors, and so you need to be able to I thank the parents when they genuinely feel that you care more about that student. They participate more because it is reciprocal. They feel love so to speak. This is the whole part again about reaching out. Oftentimes as parents and as teachers we do not always have the opportunity to reach out when we want to, or maybe

during the middle of the day when they are not available. However, that does not mean the district could not have a crisis or a counselor that could reach out after school. All parents really want is for our staff to be more empathic about their living situations, students' behaviors, and academic needs.

***Principal***.

Participant 11 indicated,

I always tell the parents that they are welcome to come in, anytime. I personally feel that parents would like to see more understanding from the teachers and principals. Many of our students and their parents have a lot of various different money barriers that keep them from becoming involved. I believe if parents felt empathy from our part, they would show more enthusiasm for their children's education.

***Similarities and Differences between teachers and principals.*** Eighty-five percent of the 13 teachers stated that there is a lack of empathy for parents that needs to be addressed. However, only 57% of the principals, or four out of the seven believe that RCOE needs to do a better job of understanding the parent needs or getting to know the person who is raising the child. This theme is regarded as very strong with 75% participant agreement, and a frequency of 22 responses.

**Sub-question 2.1.** Research Sub-Question 2.1 asked: *What actions do teachers and principals believe the county operated community schools in Riverside County can take to increase parent engagement to improve their child's academic achievement?* Two findings were exposed from this theme.

***Theme 12: Parents need to be informed and educated on their rights and responsibilities*.** Fifteen of the participants, representing 75% of the sample, agreed that parents need to know their rights and their responsibilities (see Table 24). Participants believe many parents are not aware of many things and will not know if they never become involved in their children's education. For some parents it is a language barrier, and for others it is their job responsibilities that interfere with understanding their rights and responsibilities.

Table 24

*Frequency of Theme 12 Responses*

| Teachers | Percent of Teachers | Frequency | Principals | Percent of Principals | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 | 77% | 21 | 5 | 71% | 16 |

*Teachers*.

Participant 6 stated,

> It behooves parents to be part of the school team and participate in their children's education. Parents ignore what they are entitled to and will never find out if they never show up or ask questions. I strongly believe that parent participation will increase if they are made aware of their entitlements.

*Principal*.

Participant 19 shared,

> Through our school site council and through the office we have parents know that certain things are available to them for their students. One thing that we've started doing which we haven't done in a long time is getting parents more involved in their kids' education and sharing more of their rights. A lot of parents are

oblivious to actually what it is they are entitled to as a parent and so they feel that when the kid comes here then they have no other say. So, at the county as an organization we've opened up more in sharing with parents what it is we're doing as an organization and what it is, they can do. We help them, but they need to show up. It's kind of like a little touchy, but we have them participate in in our budget decisions and funding. However, they don't really understand a lot of the information being shared with them. Parent participation has increased minimally, and we still have a long way to go. We are hoping that as a parent it does entice them to do more knowing that they have something in their hands that they can make decisions.

*Similarities and Differences between teachers and principals*. Data revealed this as a very strong theme with 75% of participant agreement, and 37 frequency of responses, indicating that it was discussed more than once on average. Ten out of 13 teacher respondents agreed that parents need to be educated on their rights and their responsibilities, and five out of seven principals also agreed. This is a very similar percentage of teacher and principal agreement. There was a 76% agreement among teachers, while principals concurred at 71%.

***Theme 13: Offering parenting courses can enhance the parents' skills to support their children's learning.*** Fifteen participants, representing 75% of the sample, shared that many of their parents lack the parenting skills necessary to guide and lead the children (see Table 25). The participants believe parents should be offered parenting classes at different times of the day that will allow the working parents to participate.

Table 25

*Frequency of Theme 13 Responses*

| Teachers | Percent of Teachers | Frequency | Principals | Percent of Principals | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12 | 92 | 28 | 3 | 43 | 13 |

*Teacher*.

Participant 1 stated,

In terms of engagement parents can be offered classes. We have a system that is a simple certificate program certificate program that actually, gives them something they can use when they go maybe for a job interview. Short courses six weeks twice a week for eight weeks that leads them to a preparation of a secretarial job or other positions. Experiential work is also something to help support the parent. I mean to encourage other parents to become involved in the schools. You know this is insane when you start offering programs that that give parents tools that advance their own career.

*Principal*.

Participant 9 reported,

We have this program which helps us help parents with a kind of leadership and academic research, aimed at supporting the student. The program is intended to offer parenting skills and strategies for parents to guide their children. The program provides strategies to help parents with any kind of homework. Additionally, the program offers the skills necessary for parents to support the children when the need arises, and children are being confrontational not

complying. We give them the coping skills that any parent can use to become the best parent possible. However, due to many barriers, parents do not participate.

*Similarities and Differences between teachers and principals*. The analysis of this theme indicated a very strong, 75% participant agreement, and a frequency of 41 responses. The majority of the 12teachers, or 92%, believe that providing parental classes is essential to building parent skills that will help support students in school. However, three of the seven principals, or 43% concurred with the teacher respondents, indicating a two to one difference among the perceptions shared by the two groups.

**Sub-Question 2.2**. Research Sub-Question 2.2 asked: *What actions do principals and teachers believe are a priority to increase parent engagement to improve their child's academic achievement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County?* This theme revealed 2 findings.

***Theme 14: Provide parents with sustained positive encouragement and opportunities to participate in their children's education.*** Seventeen participants, representing 85% of the sample, stated that RCOE teachers and principals need to do a better job of inviting parents to school events, meetings, or luncheons (see Table 26). Inclusively, participants say that many parents have mentioned that they forget about the meetings or events they have been invited to attend. When asked if they received reminders, they say that only on a few occasions have they received a follow-up call, email, or text.

Table 26

*Frequency of Theme 14 Responses*

| Teachers | Percent of Teachers | Frequency | Principals | Percent of Principals | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13 | 100 | 42 | 4 | 57 | 21 |

*Teacher*.

Participant 19 shared,

I believe that when we have activities, like an experiential trip, a football or baseball game parental invites would be nice other than just coming in for open house or coming in for award day. I think parents need to be going on trips with us becoming more involved with their communities. You know I think that would help parents to encourage other parents to be a part of it. If you are in a good setting in a community that provides services, it is not something you keep to yourself. I think we need to do more with our parents we need to get our parents more involved. We need to do more open invites. We need to have parents become a part of the school, like bring something cultural to share. We also need a better understanding of different cultures.

*Principal*.

Participant 14 indicated,

We communicate to parents that we have an open-door policy, and that they are welcome to come in. They do not need to give me a heads up on their visit, or that they can just come in whenever they want. I believe it is a big thing for me just having that door, because you also need to have that dialogue that has the

advantage of setting them at ease. Encouraging parents to feel at home and makes it a little bit easier for them to visit a next time.

*Similarities and Differences between teachers and principals*. This theme had a very strong, 85% agreement among the participants, with a frequency of 63. This is the highest frequency of responses among all themes included in this data analysis. One hundred percent of the teachers agreed that in order to gain parent involvement, parents must be encouraged and made feel they are important. Four of the seven, or 57%, of principals concurred with the teachers. Teachers had double the frequency of responses to the principals.

***Theme 15: Educate parents on the purpose and value of alternative education, focusing on helping their child succeed.*** Eight participants, representing 40% of the sample, believe that parents are misinformed of what an alternative education program is supposed to do (see Table 27). Participants shared that there is a high need for the parents to be educated in the alternative education programs, what the purpose of the program is supposed to serve.

Table 27

*Frequency of Theme 15 Responses*

| Teachers | Percent of Teachers | Frequency | Principals | Percent of Principals | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | 46 | 11 | 2 | 29 | 3 |

*Teacher*.

Participant 4 stated,

Parents are truly not aware of what alternative education has to offer the students. Parents need to be educated on what alternative education will provide for the at-

risk youth, and how many of the students that come to our schools are capable of succeeding and turning their lives around. Not all students are bad. Parents believe that alternative education programs are only for the bad students, and the stigma placed on community schools needs to be changed.

*Principals*.

Participant 7 indicated,

> When new students are registered, parents are also told that we are available. We tell them to please call, and please come in when they wish. Inclusively, we tell them to please share, and let us know when stuff is not going right at home. Informing us is the only way we can help is if you share with us. Yet, many parents never show up, and others believe the stigma of community schools being a drop off site where students are all bad.

Participant 14 furthermore shared,

> Sometimes the parents have a fear of institutions in that they are unfamiliar with the program itself. Parents need to be made aware of the program's goals and expectations. Parents might not realize that they actually have a lot of positive input to offer to help support their child's education and the schools. When parents first approach the school with their child, they do not know the value and significance of their involvement to help the child succeed. I believe that RCOE needs to implement better presentations of their programs to the parents. An informed parent will become more involved sooner or later.

*Similarities and differences between teachers and principals*. This is one of the two lower ranked findings. Forty percent of the 20 participants believed it was important

to change parent's view of alternative education. While less than a majority of the participants discussed this finding, there was a frequency of 14 responses from the 8 participants.

## Summary

Chapter IV summarized and presented the results of the qualitative phenomenological interviews. The interviews captured the lived experiences of 20 participants (13 teachers and 7 principals) who work with at-risk youth in RCOE's alternative education. Based on the eight research questions, the data was collected and analyzed providing the findings for future research. Inclusively, Table 28 provides a summary of the research questions, findings, and percent of participant agreement collected from the coding of the data.

Table 28

*Summary of Research Questions, Findings, and Percent of Agreement*

| Research Questions | Findings | Percent of Participant Agreement |
|---|---|---|
| Central Question 1: *How do teachers and principals perceive parent engagement affects the academic achievement of high school students within the community schools in Riverside County?* | Finding 1: The lack of communication between parents and schools creates unwelcoming environments. | 70% |
| | Finding 2: Parents lack the knowledge to support the student learning of academic concepts. | 40% |
| 1.1. How do teachers and principals perceive parents are, or are not, involved in supporting their child's academic achievement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County? | Finding 1: Frequency of parent involvement affects the student motivation to stay engaged in their education. | 80% |
| | Finding 2: The negative perception of school program causes parent non-involvement. | 45% |
| 1.2. What do teachers and principals perceive influence whether or not parents are engaged with their child's academic achievement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County? | Finding 1: Parent disinterest in collaborating with schools becomes a barrier for student academic performance. | 85% |

(continued)

Table 28

*Summary of Research Questions, Findings, & Percent of Agreement*

| Research Questions | Findings | Percent of Participant Agreement |
|---|---|---|
| 1.2. What do teachers and principals perceive influence whether or not parents are engaged with their child's academic achievement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County? | Finding 2: Embarrassment of student behaviors keeps parents from becoming involved in their children's education. | 50% |
| | Finding 3: Parents are burned-out from all the problems arising from their children's behaviors. | 40% |
| 1.3. What supports or barriers do teachers and principals perceive exist that affect parent engagement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County? | Finding 1: Transportation is a significant barrier that prevents parents from becoming involved in their children's education. | 55% |
| | Finding 2: Due to time constraints, parents are not as involved as possible to support their children's education. | 50% |
| | Finding 3: Language barriers are a major cause for the lack of parental involvement in education. | 45% |
| Central Question 2: What do *teachers and principals perceive as the actions necessary for the community schools in Riverside County to implement to improve parent engagement to increase high school student achievement?* | Finding 1: More empathy towards parent needs would improve parent involvement and increase student academic success. | 75% |
| 2.1. What actions do teachers and principals believe the county operated community schools in Riverside County can take to increase parent engagement to improve their child's academic achievement? | Finding 1: Parent need to be informed and educated on their rights and responsibilities. | 75% |
| | Finding 2: Offering parenting courses can enhance the parents' skills to support their children's learning. | 75% |
| 2.2 What actions do principals and teachers believe are a priority to increase parent engagement to improve their child's academic achievement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County? | Finding 1: Provide parents with sustained positive encouragement and opportunities to participate in their children's education. | 85% |
| | Finding 2: Educate parents on the purpose and value of Alternative Education, focusing on helping their child succeed. | 40% |

**Summary of Similarities and Differences**

There were three very strong themes with 100% of participants agreeing on Themes 1, 3, and 14; Theme 1 - *The lack of communication between parents and schools creates unwelcoming environments*; Theme 3 - *Frequency of parent involvement affects*

*the student motivation to stay engaged in their education*; and Theme 14 - *Sustained positive parent encouragement needs improvement to gain parent collaboration and involvement in their children's education*. Theme 14 had the highest frequency of responses, with 42 teacher responses and 21 principals. Theme 13 had the second highest percent of agreement with 92% of teachers agreeing that: *Offering parenting courses can enhance the parents' skills to support their children's learning*. The principals' second highest agreement was on Theme 3 - *Frequency of parent involvement affects the student motivation to stay engaged in their education*, with 86% of the seven principals concurring. Theme 3 was also considered by the researcher to be very strong with 38 responses from 80% of the respondents agreeing. Yet, Theme 1 is the theme with the largest difference in the percentage of agreement between teachers and principals, as only 1 principal agreed with 100% of the teachers (see Table 29).

Table 29

*Teachers, Principals, and Frequencies*

| Theme Number | Teachers | Percent of Teachers | Frequency | Principals | Percent of Principals | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 13 | 100% | 28 | 1 | 14% | 5 |
| 2 | 5 | 38% | 7 | 3 | 43% | 4 |
| 3 | 10 | 77% | 32 | 6 | 86% | 6 |
| 4 | 7 | 54% | 17 | 2 | 29% | 3 |
| 5 | 10 | 77% | 11 | 7 | 100% | 9 |
| 6 | 8 | 62% | 11 | 2 | 29% | 3 |
| 7 | 5 | 38% | 9 | 3 | 43% | 5 |
| 8 | 6 | 46% | 9 | 5 | 71% | 8 |
| 9 | 7 | 54% | 9 | 3 | 43% | 6 |
| 10 | 5 | 38% | 6 | 4 | 57% | 4 |
| 11 | 11 | 85% | 15 | 4 | 57% | 7 |
| 12 | 10 | 77% | 21 | 5 | 71% | 16 |
| 13 | 12 | 92% | 28 | 3 | 43% | 13 |
| 14 | 13 | 100% | 42 | 4 | 57% | 21 |
| 15 | 6 | 46% | 11 | 2 | 29% | 3 |

## Major Findings

After the analysis of the data and a review of the specific findings, the researcher consolidated the 15 specific findings into seven major findings for this study. While teachers and principals viewed some issues differently there was general agreement among the two groups regarding their experience with parent engagement in the RCOE Community Schools.

**Finding 1: Parent disinterest in collaborating with the county community schools affects student academic performance**

Eighty-five percent of the respondents agreed that parents' participation does make a difference in the student performance. Participant 8 said, "Sometimes when I talk to parents, they are disinterested from the beginning, or they begin making excuses why they cannot be there. These parents do not realize the difference their presence can make in their child's education." As stated by the USDOE (2014) Parent engagement can be a key factor in the academic success of students, support to school collaboration, and stimulus for convincing students to go to college and seek success. Furthermore, research reveals that parental engagement is imperative for student success (K. L. Henry et al., 2012; Hooven et al., 2013; Rath et al., 2008).

**Finding 2: Parents of students in county community schools often view alternative education negatively, as a last resort for their child**

Fifty-four percent of teachers and 29% of principals agreed that there is a need to educate parents on what alternative education has to offer their children. Participant 13 stated that parents do not show themselves at school sites, due to the negative reputation that has been placed on community schools. Participant 13 further states, "When a

student gets to us, parents are so afraid to even know what's going on because, they have only had a bad history of engagement with the school. We need to educate the parents what alternative education really is at our schools." As declared by Loucks (1992) parental awareness of how schools function helps to promote higher student academic performance.

**Finding 3: Parents may not have the knowledge and skills necessary to support their children's learning**

Participant 7 said,

> Students served in RCOE, the parents don't have high attainment of academic achievement and something should be done to support the parents as well. I think that lack of education is a barrier for their involvement and so they're intimidated by educators. Helping the parents will help improve their support and involvement in their students' education.

Inclusively, Participant 1 said, "Most of my parents are, you know, I would say challenged themselves. And those parents, I believe would also benefit from some classes themselves." However, parents need to know that engagement can be as simple as knowing where students are, who they are with, and what they are doing. Inclusively, parental monitoring research exists related to domains such as, academics that includes awareness of students' class schedules, and behavior history in schools (K. L. Henry, 2007).

**Finding 4: Lack of transportation, work schedules, and the inability to speak English are barriers that prevent parents from being involved in the county community schools**

There is an average of 50% of participants agreeing on these three barriers that prevent parents from becoming involved. However, transportation is the most significant of the three barriers mentioned. Participant 12 shared, not having the financial means to provide transportation for the students to and from the schools is an issue that abounds with our parents. You know because we live in this area public transportation is not easy with the heat and sometimes having to travel with little kids. In addition Participant 14 stated, that transportation is a huge problem. It is definitely one of the most eye opening problems during the first year of employment in RCOE. Something else that needs to be mentioned and not left unheard is the poverty levels of these families. Parents could not afford to take the bus, and many of them do not have cars.

**Finding 5: Providing parents with sustained positive encouragement and opportunities to participate in their children's education are necessary to increase parent engagement**

A significant number of respondents agreed on this theme. There was a 100% of teachers and 57% of principals that concurred that RCOE teacher and principals need to do a better job of connecting with parents. Participant 14 shared that parents are informed of the open-door policy at their school site. Parents do not need to give a heads up on their visit, and know they can come whenever needed. She further states, "I believe it is a big thing for me just having that open door, because you also need to have that dialogue that has the advantage of setting them at ease. Encouraging parents to feel

at home and makes it a little bit easier for them to visit a next time." It is important to sustain parental engagement, which occurs when both parents and schools are committed to the partnership of the students' academic success (J. L. Epstein & Sanders, 2000).

**Finding 6: Providing parenting courses can help parents understand their rights and responsibilities for supporting their children's learning, and see the value and opportunities offered through alternative education**

Fifteen participants, 10 teachers and five principals concurred that it is important for parents to know their rights and responsibilities to help support their children. These participants agreed that many parents are not aware of many things and will never become involved if they do not become involved in their children's education. Participant 12 said, "When parents are made aware of their rights, things change. I make sure I share any of the resources we have to offer at out site." Likewise, Participant 8, stated "I strongly believe that parent participation will increase if we do a better job of informing them of their rights and responsibilities."

**Finding 7: Communication with parents and showing empathy for the challenges they face is important for increasing their involvement in their children's learning**

This theme had a significantly strong outcome, with a ratio of 13:1 agreement. One hundred percent of teachers, which is 13 teachers and one principal shared their beliefs on the concerns with the existing communication between the RCOE schools and parents, and that changes need to be made. Participant 4 shared that a welcoming atmosphere can make a difference on the involvement of parents. A better form of communication needs to happen at our sites to maintain that positive energy for parents to want to visit. Participant 13 said,

> By us making that positive gesture towards them, I see that open line of communication that should be improved at all sites. We have seen parents are more willing to encourage their student to get to school somehow, some way or ask for help from other people.

Inclusively, Participant 16 mentioned the need for new strategies to help improve the ways in which school sites communicate with parents and said, "I think this school needs to do a better job communicating that we are here for the whole family." Similarly, J. L. Epstein's (1995) *Theoretical Model of Influences* explains six types of parental engagement that contributes to the success of students. One of the types is Communication – or working to educate families about their children's progress and school services and providing opportunities for parents to communicate with the school. In addition, maintaining positive communication between parents and school staff creates positive relationships, and increases parental involvement (Christensen & Cleary, 1990; J. L. Epstein, 1995).

Chapter IV contained the reporting and analysis of the data for this study. Chapter V provides the findings, conclusions, implications for action resulting from the data analyzed for this study. In addition, the implications for action, and recommendations for future research are included based on the findings for this study.

# CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter I provided an introduction to the study as well as the background to the research. Also, included in Chapter I, was the statement of the research problem, the purpose statement, significance of the problem, definitions, and delimitations. Chapter II, introduced the literature relating to this study and its purpose. Chapter III focused on the methodology, research design, and procedures for data collection and analysis used for this study. Chapter IV contained the reporting and analysis of data. Chapter V provides the findings, conclusions, implications for action resulting from the data analyzed for this study. In addition are the recommendations for future research based on the findings for this study.

## Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand and explain how teachers and principals perceive parent engagement affects high school academic achievement within county operated community schools in Riverside County California. An additional purpose of the study was to understand and explain actions that teachers and principals believe are necessary to increase parent engagement within county operated community schools in Riverside County.

## Research Questions

This study was guided by two central questions. The central questions were divided into sub-questions.

**Central Question 1**

Central Question 1 asked: *How do teachers and principals perceive parent engagement affects the academic achievement of high school students within the community schools in Riverside County?*

**Sub-Question 1**. There were three sub-questions designed to answer Central Question 1:

1.1. How do teachers and principals perceive parents are, or are not, involved in supporting their child's academic achievement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County?

1.2. What do teachers and principals perceive influence whether or not parents are engaged with their child's academic achievement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County?

1.3. What supports or barriers do teachers and principals perceive exist that affect parent engagement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County?

**Central Question 2**

Central Question 2 asked: *What do teachers and principals perceive as the actions necessary for the community schools in Riverside County to implement to improve parent engagement to increase high school student achievement?*

**Sub-Question 2**. There were three sub-questions designed to answer Central Question 2:

2.1. What actions do teachers and principals believe the county operated community schools in Riverside County can take to increase parent engagement to improve their child's academic achievement?

2.2. What actions do principals and teachers believe need to be implemented first to increase parent engagement to improve their child's academic achievement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County?

## Research Methods

A qualitative phenomenological research method was selected for this study in order to examine the lived experiences of expert teachers and principals working with the at-risk youth in the RCOE community schools, and to determine the actions necessary to increase parental involvement as perceived by the teachers and principals. The data was collected through a personal in-depth and unstructured interview containing four demographic questions and eight interviews questions. Likewise, in-depth interviews helped to capture the teachers' and principals' perceptions of how the involvement of parents in their children's education makes a difference in the students' academic performance and behaviors.

## Population and Sample

The population and target population for this study emerged from the alternative education system representing six types of alternative schools, including: alternative, community day, continuation, county community, juvenile court, and opportunity. For the purpose of this study county community schools were selected. There were 71 active

county community schools in the 2016-17 school year that served 14,392 students (CDE, 2017).

The sample for this study was selected from the target population consisting of 25 teachers and principals employed at the RCOE's 7 community schools. All seven principals indicated their willingness to participate in the study. Eighteen teachers were interested in participating in the study. A random sample process designed to give equal opportunity to all candidates to participate was used to determine the 13 teacher participants. A random list generator was used to determine the 13 teacher candidates needed from the total 18 possible candidates. The sample includes 20 participants, seven principals and 13 teachers from RCOE.

## Major Findings

A summary of the themes identified is presented with respect to the central research and the sub-questions. An analysis of the data using NVivo helped to identify the themes that emerged from the interviews. The researcher also analyzed the similarities and differences in the themes that emerged from the teacher and principals responses. Themes were divided by teacher and principal participants, participant agreement, and frequency of responses. The themes with the most participant responses were the ones selected for this study. As a result of the analysis, 15 themes (see Table 30) emerged, and were associated with the research questions.

Table 30

*Themes*

| Number | Themes |
|---|---|
| 1 | The lack of communication between parents and schools creates unwelcoming environments. |
| 2 | Parents lack the knowledge to support the student learning of academic concepts. |
| 3 | Frequency of parent involvement affects the student motivation to stay engaged in their education. |
| 4 | The negative perception of school program causes parent non-involvement. |
| 5 | Parent disinterest in collaborating with schools becomes a barrier for student academic performance. |
| 6 | Embarrassment of student behaviors keeps parents from becoming involved in their children's education. |
| 7 | Parents are burned-out from all the problems arising from their children's behaviors. |
| 8 | Transportation is a significant barrier that prevents parents from becoming involved in their children's education. |
| 9 | Due to time constraints, parents are not as involved as possible to support their children's education. |
| 10 | Language barriers are a major cause for the lack of parental involvement in education. |
| 11 | More empathy towards parent needs would improve parent involvement and increase student academic success. |
| 12 | Parent need to be informed and educated on their rights and responsibilities. |
| 13 | Offering parenting courses can enhance the parents' skills to support their children's learning. |
| 14 | Provide parents with sustained positive encouragement and opportunities to participate in their children's education. |
| 15 | Educate parents on the purpose and value of Alternative Education, focusing on helping their child succeed. |

The researcher combined and consolidated like ideas from the 15 themes and supported by the intent of the participants as stated during the interviews. A list of major

findings (see Table 31) was generated from the 15 themes. A summary of each of the major findings is described in depth below to assist in understanding what emerged from the teacher and principal participant's lived experiences.

Table 31

*Major Findings*

| Number | Major Findings |
|---|---|
| 1 | Parent disinterest in collaborating with the county community schools affects student academic performance. |
| 2 | Parents of students in county community schools often view alternative education negatively, as a last resort for their child. |
| 3 | Parents may not have the knowledge and skills necessary to support their children's learning. |
| 4 | Lack of transportation, work schedules, and the inability to speak English are barriers that prevent parents from being involved in the county community schools. |
| 5 | Providing parents with sustained positive encouragement and opportunities to participate in their children's education are necessary to increase parent engagement. |
| 6 | Providing parenting courses can help parents understand their rights and responsibilities for supporting their children's learning, and see the value and opportunities offered through alternative education. |
| 7 | Communication with parents and showing empathy for the challenges they face is important for increasing their involvement in their children's learning. |

**Finding 1: Parent disinterest in collaborating with the county community schools affects student academic performance**

Teacher and principal participants agreed that the reluctance of parent involvement can negatively affect an unmotivated student. Teacher and principal also stated that in their experience, parents have no interest in visiting the school, or

collaborating with the school to help their children. Participants shared that the disinterest of parents also causes student disengagement, because students feel parents do not care about them. Participant 7 said, "It is clear to me that parents do not want to be bothered, and I think if somebody really wanted to participate in their children's education, they would just do it, right?" Participant 7 shared, students do need that little boost of confidence when they see that parent is interested in what they're doing in school. As stated by L. J. Epstein and Sanders (2000) it is important to sustain parental engagement, which occurs when both parents and schools are committed to the partnership of the students' academic success. In addition, Gaustad (1992) declares that students' academic achievement is greatly influenced by parent involvement.

**Finding 2: Parents of students in county community schools often view alternative education negatively, as a last resort for their child**

Parents indicated their need to understand what the alternative education program has to offer their children. Parents view alternative education as a punishment, following the expulsion of their children from the comprehensive schools. Teachers and principals at RCOE have met parents that share their skepticism of the community schools, but felt they had no other choice but to enroll their child in the county community school. The CDE (2016) states, county community schools' educational programs are characteristically student centered, and are adapted to meet the individual needs of students, help students transition to educational, training, or employment settings. Participant 16 concurred that parents need to consistently stay informed on the progress of their children's education and behaviors, and most importantly educated on the purpose of alternative education.

**Finding 3: Parents may not have the knowledge and skills necessary to support their children's learning**

Parents shared that they cannot help their children with their school work because they do not know the curriculum. Teachers and principals concurred that it is impossible for parents to support their children. Participant 10 said, "Some of our parents are academically challenged themselves." Teachers and principals concurred that many of their parents do not have an education, and something should be done by RCOE to help support the parents as well. As stated by Brooks (2005) educated parents are the reinforcement to hereditary meritocratic generation to generation, and are not just there for the economic support, but instill habits, knowledge and cognitive abilities.

**Finding 4: Lack of transportation, work schedules, and the inability to speak English are barriers that prevent parents from being involved in the county community schools**

Three logistical barriers were identified by teachers and principals that impact parent involvement in community schools. Socio-economic status is a leading cause of carless parents, which teachers and principals concurred is a reason for the non-involvement of parents. Families often have either parents working or single parents working long hours to make ends meet. Busy work schedules do not allow the parents to be part of their children's education. Furthermore, parents have shared with teachers and principals that not being able to speak English, is the reason they sometimes do not show up to school events. Participants shared that all RCOE sites have translators for the parents, yet non-English speaking parents still do not show up. Green (2014) shares that economic pressure is one of the major factors why parents are not involved. He further

states that parents are overwhelmed with having to put food on the table, and inclusively happens with educated parents.

**Finding 5: Providing parents with sustained positive encouragement and opportunities to participate in their children's education are necessary to increase parent engagement**

Teachers and principals concurred that parents need to be informed that that their involvement is crucial to their children's academic performance. Due to the high stress or pressures parents encounter due to their children's behaviors, there is a dire need for the implementation of opportunities for parents to feel needed in the schools. Participant 19 shared that parents need to be given more opportunities to participate in school events and field trips, so that they can also connect with the communities. K. V. Hoover-Dempsey, Walker et al. (2012) stated that parent involvement requires general invitations, demands, and opportunities for involvement. In addition, they added that parental sense of efficacy for helping their children succeed needs to be addressed.

**Finding 6: Providing parenting courses can help parents understand their rights and responsibilities for supporting their children's learning, and see the value and opportunities offered through alternative education**

Teachers and principals stated that parents would highly benefit from courses to learn about their rights and responsibilities as parents of RCOE students. Participants also agreed that educating parents would help increase the support for their children, as parents would see the importance of their children's educational success. One participant stated that parents who are aware of what alternative education has to offer at-risk youth, has a higher possibility of assisting the child succeed. Cole (2018) states that home is an

influence on children's higher achievement rates, better attendance, and higher education. And that a process of communication is essential in supporting the parents who have questions related to school policies, grades, and the curriculum.

**Finding 7: Communication with parents and showing empathy for the challenges they face is important for increasing their involvement in their children's learning**

Communicating with parents that their involvement is crucial to their children's learning, was an important factor identified during the interviews. Teachers and principals agreed that parents are exhausted and lost, and need to be understood. Participant 19 said, "There is a lack of empathy on the districts' part to understand parents who are struggling with their children's behaviors." Venet (2018) declares that miscommunication with parents, lack of understanding and empathy all contribute to relational challenges. In addition, it is essential for educators to build authentic caring relationships with parents, which are the basis to a safe and caring school environment.

## Conclusions

After analyzing the major findings from the data, the researcher developed the following conclusions. The conclusions emanate from the findings on parent disinterest, parent's negative perspective of alternative education, uneducated parents, and lack of transportation, time, and language barriers. Moreover, the limited parent participation opportunities, parents not understanding their rights and responsibilities, and a need for genuine communication that affect parent involvement.

**Conclusion 1: Without strong parent interest and support students are more likely to dropout**

Findings from this study indicated that teacher's and principal's perception is that parent involvement is necessary to increase student academic performance. The findings also indicated that parent disinterest creates a disconnection between the student, parents, and teachers and principals. Parent involvement requires more than just dropping off students at school and picking them up in the afternoon. Students have shared their feelings about their parents not caring about them. Participants stated that parents are always in a hurry to go do something else, and just wave bye from their cars not giving teachers or principal the opportunity to have a word with them. As stated by A. Henderson and Mapp (2002) providing programs and interventions that involve the family in the students' education is linked to increased academic achievement.

**Conclusion 2: Parent involvement in county community schools is lower when parents are not educated on the purpose of alternative education**

Participants shared that parents often make comments about the negative connotation placed on the community schools. Parents feel embarrassed about their child attending a community school, because then society thinks the child is a bad person. Sometimes students make one bad choice that gets them expelled from their district and now the student is identified as being a bad kid. Participant 10, shared that a parent cried during a visit and explained her disappointment about her child being at that "bad school." When the parent was questioned why she thought it was a bad school, she said, "Every kid sent to this school is bad, and that is why I do not like to step foot here" (Participant 10). This is an example of a parent not understanding the purpose of

alternative education. Whitby (2014) declares that parents need to be kept informed on what is going on in education and make it a collaborative process, in order to build a strong support team for the student. He continues to say that parents cannot be expected to understand the dynamics of programs if they are not educated from the beginning.

**Conclusion 3: Parent's ability to support their children's learning is reduced when the parents have a limited educational background**

Participants declared that many of the parents are not educated themselves, and cannot help their child with their education. Parents do not necessarily have to hold a degree to support their child. A parent can do their part at home by preparing a responsible, respectable and ready to learn child. It is difficult for teachers to teach someone who is not willing to learn. If a student is willing to learn, then a positive learning environment emerges, and parents do not have to worry about not know the subject matter. Hess (2017) states that a "Handshake" between families and teachers must be established in order to help the students learn. He further defines a handshake as being a collaborative supportive team of teachers and families together focusing on the students' learning.

**Conclusion 4: When parents face lack of transportation, inflexible work schedules, and language barriers, the barriers must be mitigated for parent involvement in the county community schools to succeed**

Three barriers with the most impact on parent involvement are (a) transportation, (b) time, and (c) language. Participants concluded, that parents do not have a car or money to pay for bus tickets to attend some of the school events. Participants stated that some school sites offer parents a ride to and from school, in order for them to attend the

school events. One participant suggested the importance of building a rapport with the parents, so they feel comfortable sharing their needs, like needing a ride. The second barrier is, parents are working many hours and cannot attend the school events at the scheduled times. Participants stated that some parents are interested in attending if the events are held at times later in the day. The third barrier, is parents not speaking English and feeling embarrassed because they believe a translator will not be provided. Participants agreed that some sites do not always have a translator, but sometimes ask students to help translate. A study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (1998) stated that time (87%) and language difference (12%) are two of the top barriers that keep parents from becoming involved in their children's education.

**Conclusion 5: Parent involvement is reduced when the schools do not create or promote more school events for parents to attend**

The National Center for School Engagement (2019) states that for over 30 years research continues to show that increased student achievement is correlated to active parent involvement. Participants concurred that parents need to be invited more often to school events and not just Back to School Night or Student of the Month. Participant 1 said, "Parents need to be invited to our fieldtrips, Project Based Learning lessons, and games." All participants agreed that there is a need for teachers and principals in RCOE to create more events that bring in parents at different times of the day, so that all parents have the same opportunity to attend.

**Conclusion 6: Providing parents with training on their rights and responsibilities will increase their understanding of alternative education, and how they can be more involved in their children's education**

Participants stated that many of their parents are not aware of their rights and responsibilities as parents. They indicated it is important for parents to know what they can and cannot do in reference to their children's education. One participant declared that parents do not have the slightest clue of their rights. The participants insisted that parents need to be informed about their responsibility as advocates for their children. Parent roles in their child's education is perceived of utmost importance. Inclusively, D. Kelly (2019) stated that a strong parent involvement bond with the school is central and not supplemental to promoting a healthy, intellectual, social-emotionally prepared students, but is important to start at a young age. She further states that parents need to recognize their critical role as parents, and learn about their responsibilities to be able to support their child's education.

**Conclusion 7: Building stronger communication between parents, teachers, and principals builds stronger more empathic relationships, and helps students feel cared about and valued leading to academic achievement**

Participants declared that the lack of communication with parents limits the educational process of students, because it is important for parents to know how their child is doing. Parents need to hear both positive and negative issues occurring with their children, so when an issue arises both parents and teachers can connect and help. One participant stated that RCOE needs to be more empathic towards parents, and learn more about the needs of the parents. It was concluded that communication is essential to the

learning of students, because parents can provide guidance for the student at home while the teachers and principals encourage the learning at school. J. L. Epstein and Sanders (2000) declare that a strong communication partnership between school and home is the basis for student academic achievement.

## Implications for Action

Based on this study, implications for action are related to the major findings and conclusions of this study. These implications for action will enhance the effectiveness of parental involvement in their children's education. In addition the implications for action will provide assistance to the school system, through the increase of parent involvement.

**Implication for Action 1: Schools must create more parent programs, activities, or events that encourages parent involvement, and that can be offered to all parents on a quarterly basis with flexible hours**

Epstein's, *Theoretical Model of Influence* can be used as a guide for parental engagement that contribute to the success of students.

- Provide information that helps the parents with parenting skills by providing information on student's developmental stages and offering advice on learning-friendly home environments.
- Educate families on their children's progress, available school services, and how parents can communicate with the school.
- Offer parents a diversity of opportunities to visit their children's school and created methods to recruit and train parents to work in the school classroom.

- Encourage parents to collaborate with the school to share ideas that promote at-home learning through high expectations and strategies, so parents can monitor and help with homework.
- Include families as partners in school organizations, advisory panels, and similar committees.
- Launch a community collaborative group in which community or business groups are involved in education and schools encourage family participation in the community.

**Implication for Action 2: RCOE schools must design a sequence of ongoing quarterly parent trainings on parent rights and responsibilities as it pertains to alternative education**

A formal alternative education model needs to be designed and presented during the students' registration orientation, and throughout the school year. This will provide updated information on new resources, projects, or events happening at the schools, in which parents can be included. The trainings need to be ongoing and offer all parents the same opportunity to become informed of their rights and responsibilities as a parent. Parents need to know everything alternative education has to offer them as parents and their children.

**Implication for Action 3: Provide parents with basic skills classes and creating a handshake partnership is imperative at RCOE schools**

The handshake partnership is a collaborative team effort between parents and the school in which both sides agree to support the students' learning. Establishing a handshake partnership will ensure the collaboration between the school who will provide

funding for the parent trainings, and the parents who will agree to participate in a 12 week basic skills classes training. Providing a system of basic skills classes designed by teacher collaborative teams is also necessary for parents that do not have an education. Having knowledgeable parents will also benefit the school and student learning because parent involvement will increase.

**Implication for Action 4: RCOE schools must schedule school events with flexible hours to help parents overcome the logistical obstacles that hinders their involvement**

- Parent Surveys – distribute quarterly parent surveys on preferred times or availability can help schools with scheduling events. Then, schedule events when parents can attend. School events need to be scheduled at times when parents can attend, or offer at least two different options for attendance. Parents can also be surveyed on the times preferences.
- Transportation – Parents need to be offered a means of transportation to and from the events, so they can attend. County vans could be used to transport them to the schools. Some parents can also benefit from bus passes when they live far from the school sites.
- Availability of translators – At school sites where the translators are available, parents need to be informed of the services. At school sites where translators are not available, parents must be surveyed ahead of time to find out if translators will be needed, so the school sites can provide them.

**Implication for Action 5: Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler Model of Parental Involvement must be used to promote parental involvement in all events happening at the school sites**

It is important for the community school teachers and principals to make sure that parents receive notifications and invitations to attend school meetings and events. In order to increase parent involvement, the schools must encourage parents to participate. The Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler Model of Parental Involvement's first three levels will support RCOE teachers and principals to identify what motivates parents, methods of involvement preferred, and what learning mechanisms parents find more engaging (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995).

First Level – Parents' Basic Involvement Decision

- Motivational Beliefs – which are a function of the social system to which the parents belong. The parents' sense of self-efficacy is influenced by their family and childhood academic experiences.
- Invitation for Involvement – is the parent perception of an invitation. A general invitation looks into the welcoming aspect of the school site, and how the parent feels around school staff. A specific invitation can come from a teacher cordially inviting the parent to attend a meeting or school/classroom event.
- Life Context Variables – knowledge capacity, time and energy, and culture. Parents might not feel they know enough to help, so they are reluctant to get involved. Time constraints due to jobs or family obligations influence parental decisions to participate in educational activities that are sometimes scheduled at school convenience hours. Culture is also a life context that plays a role in

keeping parents from becoming involved, because traditionally they have been on the side lines letting the teachers and school staff do their jobs.

Second Level – Parents' Involvement Forms

- Home-based Behaviors – is a clear communication between parents and their children on their goals, values, and expectations.
- School-based Behaviors – is an effective communication between the schools and parents that influences the students' academic progress.

Third Level – Mechanisms of Parental Involvement

- Encouragement – parents contribute to student self-efficacy by encouraging the student to persist on the academics.
- Modeling – parents modeling the academic interest by attending meetings or events contributes to student engagement.
- Reinforcement – continual reinforcement of expectations by parents influences the student attributes necessary for academic success.

**Implication for Action 6: Parent involvement in the schools must be addressed by designing a sustainable line of communication that reaches out to parents at least twice a week on the progression or regression of the students**

Schools must implement a formal communication model between teachers, principals, and parents. There is a dire need for schools to stay in contact with parents for many reasons. Parents need to be notified about their children's behaviors and academic performance. Notifications need to be done using different forms of communication via parents' preference. For example: emails, texts, phone calls, or class dojo. The communication model can be presented at quarterly awards ceremonies in the morning

and evening to give parents different time options to attend. This would help reach out to all parents of students that are enrolled at different times of the school year, and offer the working parents different times to attend. All school sites will have different forms of communication, depending on the parent population needs.

## Recommendations for Further Research

Based on this research study and its findings, it is recommended that further research be conducted with county community school students, parents, teachers, principals, and all support staff. The researcher recommends the following studies:

1. Conduct a phenomenological qualitative study to replicate this study using a larger sample of community schools across California's 58 counties that would offer a better understanding of the actions necessary to increase parent involvement in the community schools across the state of California.
2. Conduct a mixed method study to examine the possibility of different barriers keeping parents from becoming involved in all county community schools within California.
3. Conduct a quantitative study on the graduation rates from community schools to post graduate schools to be led to support future literature on the effectiveness of community school settings.
4. Conduct a phenomenological qualitative study of the perception of comprehensive school teachers and principals to help with building a stronger and wider list of actions needed to increase parent involvement. This would allow researchers to discover more of the needs of parents and what can be done to increase student academic performance.

5. Conduct a mixed-methods study to find how to increase the collaboration between the school team supporting the students' academic achievement, including the parents. These studies would disclose the importance of parent involvement in their children's education. The information or data gathered could help school programs create collaborative teams that could support the students before greater issues arise in their educational journeys.
6. Conduct a phenomenological study to find how sequence of parent trainings on the purpose of alternative education, rights and responsibilities of parents, and basic skills classes can help the parents.

## Concluding Remarks and Reflections

My career in education started at a comprehensive high school as an Art Teacher. After four years, I decided to change the educational environment in which I was teaching. I hold a Masters in School Counseling, and a special education credential. At the time there were no job opportunities available as a school counselor. I decided to apply with RCOE in the Alternative Education Program. I was hired as a community school teacher, and I traded my art teacher title for Specialized Academic Instructor. Well, was I in for a surprise? It was a tough beginning; however, I was able to fit in and learn what it takes to support at-risk middle and high school students who are expelled from the districts. My school counseling background really helped me work with the needs of at-risk youth.

Three years of working with community school students, I decided I had to go back to school and follow that doctorate I had always wanted to pursue. From the beginning of my educational career I have always wanted to do something to work with

youth. Yet, now it was time for me to try something more challenging, as if working with community school students was not challenging enough. My coworker and now thematic dissertation partner, Maria Haro and I talked about earning a doctorate and we immediately decided jump on board.

Before searching for a dissertation topic Maria and I agreed that we would choose a topic that was meaningful enough to benefit our current jobs with RCOE. We reached out Dr. Diana Walsh-Reuss through email and explained our need for a topic. Dr. Diana was the person who inspired us to embark on our journey and find out what could possibly increase parent involvement at our community schools.

I was very driven to find what could motivate parents enough to become more involved in their children's education and if parent involvement could increase student academic achievement. I have been working with the alternative education program in a community school setting for seven years, and from my experience parents have lacked being involved in their children's education. Sometimes this issue seems to have no solution.

This study allowed me to learn from the experiences and perceptions of 23 expert teachers and principals. From their experiences I was able to clarify many questions, and improve my ability as a teacher and leader. In addition, the participants were sincere enough to share their deepest beliefs and concerns on the need for parent involvement, and how our community school classroom settings would be greatly supported with the presence of parents.

The dissertation process was an amazing journey that opened doors to future studies and tickled my inquisitive brain. This journey instilled in me an eagerness to

search for new concepts, philosophies, or methods that will bridge that gap needed to support both parents and students. I was able to analyze a diversity of viewpoints that have gone unidentified. However, I will continue to develop as a teacher, a researcher, and a as a person in search of solutions to help the student learners.

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# APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

## Synthesis Matrix

| LITERATURE | ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION | COMMUNITY SCHOOL | AT RISK YOUTH | EXPULSIONS | DROPOUTS | PARENT & SCHOOL COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION | PARENT INVOLVEMENT | ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT | TEACHER PERCEPTIONS | PRINCIPAL PERCEPTIONS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Achieve, Inc. (2006). Identifying potential dropouts: Key lessons for building an early warning data system | | | | | X | X | | X | | |
| Alvarez, C. (2009). Effective strategies and practices to increase parent involvement in Title I schools. Ann Arbor, University of La Verne. | | | | | | X | X | | | |
| Armstrong. L., & Barber, R. (1997). An uneven start: A report on alternative education in Mississippi. A paper presented to the Mississippi Human Services Agenda. Jackson, Mississippi | X | | | | | | | X | | |
| Aron, L. (2003). Towards a typology of alternative education programs: A compilation of elements from literature. Urban Institute. | X | | | | | | | | | |
| Aron, L. Y. (2006). An overview of alternative education. The Urban Institute. | X | | | X | | | | X | | |
| Atha, R. D. (1998). A comparison of perceived attitudes toward parent involvement among selected secondary level administrators, teachers, and parents with secondary age students. (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Missouri-Kansas City). ProQuest Digital Dissertations. No. AAT 9830215. | | | | | | | X | | X | X |
| Association, N. E. (2008). Preventing Future High School Dropouts An Advocacy and Action Guide for NEA State and Local Affiliates. Retrieved from Washington, DC: http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/HE/dropoutguide1108.pdf | | | | | | | | X | | |
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APPENDIX B

## California Counties Enrollment and Expulsions Rates

| CALIFORNIA COUNTIES | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2016-2017 SCHOOL YEAR | | | | 2015-2016 SCHOOL YEAR | | | |
| | NAME OF COUNTY | Cumulative Enrollment | Total Expulsions | Unduplicated expulsions | Expulsion Rates | Cumulative Enrollment | Total Expulsions | Unduplicated expulsions | Expulsion Rates |
| 0 | **Statewide** | **6,405,496** | **5,657** | **5,611** | **0.09%** | **6,410,668** | **5,701** | **5,634** | **0.09%** |
| 1 | Alameda | 235,470 | 148 | 147 | 0.06% | 234,268 | 113 | 112 | 0.05% |
| 2 | Alpine | 95 | 0 | 0 | 0.00% | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0.00% |
| 3 | Amador | 4,325 | 0 | 0 | 0.00% | 4,307 | 0 | 0 | 0.00% |
| 4 | Butte | 32,834 | 125 | 124 | 0.38% | 32,602 | 102 | 100 | 0.31% |
| 5 | Calaveras | 6,030 | 5 | 5 | 0.08% | 6,077 | 4 | 4 | 0.07% |
| 6 | Colusa | 4,890 | 2 | 2 | 0.04% | 4,826 | 0 | 0 | 0.00% |
| 7 | Contra Costa | 184,036 | 69 | 69 | 0.04% | 183,047 | 79 | 79 | 0.04% |
| 8 | Del Norte | 4,585 | 0 | 0 | 0.00% | 4,511 | 0 | 0 | 0.00% |
| 9 | El Dorado | 28,459 | 30 | 30 | 0.11% | 28,330 | 17 | 17 | 0.06% |
| 10 | Fresno | 210,139 | 363 | 362 | 0.17% | 209,336 | 369 | 367 | 0.18% |
| 11 | Glenn | 5,937 | 1 | 1 | 0.02% | 6,372 | 0 | 0 | 0.00% |
| 12 | Humboldt | 18,015 | 8 | 8 | 0.04% | 19,296 | 10 | 10 | 0.05% |
| 13 | Imperial | 39,308 | 46 | 46 | 0.12% | 39,081 | 14 | 14 | 0.04% |
| 14 | Inyo | 6,492 | 14 | 14 | 0.22% | 6,972 | 12 | 12 | 0.17% |
| 15 | Kern | 195,216 | 169 | 167 | 0.09% | 190,094 | 215 | 215 | 0.11% |
| 15 | Kings | 30,687 | 132 | 131 | 0.43% | 30,187 | 134 | 133 | 0.44% |
| 17 | Lake | 10,054 | 26 | 26 | 0.26% | 10,040 | 17 | 17 | 0.17% |
| 18 | Lassen | 4,653 | 1 | 1 | 0.02% | 4,807 | 0 | 0 | 0.00% |
| 19 | Los Angeles | 1,571,756 | 549 | 549 | 0.03% | 1,586,942 | 588 | 587 | 0.04% |
| 20 | Madera | 33,160 | 42 | 42 | 0.13% | 32,767 | 106 | 98 | 0.30% |
| 21 | Marin | 34,690 | 4 | 4 | 0.01% | 34,624 | 1 | 1 | 0.00% |
| 22 | Mariposa | 2,046 | 0 | 0 | 0.00% | 2,055 | 3 | 3 | 0.15% |
| 23 | Mendocino | 13,736 | 23 | 23 | 0.17% | 13,864 | 25 | 25 | 0.18% |
| 24 | Merced | 60,890 | 132 | 131 | 0.22% | 60,621 | 149 | 149 | 0.25% |
| 25 | Modoc | 1,589 | 10 | 10 | 0.63% | 1,612 | 2 | 2 | 0.12% |
| 26 | Mono | 2,592 | 0 | 0 | 0.00% | 2,892 | 0 | 0 | 0.00% |
| 27 | Monterey | 80,444 | 50 | 50 | 0.06% | 79,557 | 67 | 67 | 0.08% |
| 28 | Napa | 21,116 | 14 | 14 | 0.07% | 21,473 | 3 | 3 | 0.01% |
| 29 | Nevada | 14,525 | 9 | 9 | 0.06% | 15,214 | 1 | 1 | 0.01% |
| 30 | Orange | 505,775 | 225 | 224 | 0.04% | 509,039 | 204 | 203 | 0.04% |
| 31 | Placer | 75,815 | 51 | 51 | 0.07% | 74,581 | 51 | 51 | 0.07% |
| 32 | Plumas | 2,299 | 0 | 0 | 0.00% | 2,362 | 2 | 2 | 0.08% |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 33 | Riverside | 449,493 | 861 | 855 | 0.19% | 449,765 | 755 | 739 | 0.16% |
| 34 | Sacramento | 258,720 | 160 | 159 | 0.06% | 255,588 | 144 | 144 | 0.06% |
| 35 | San Benito | 11,597 | 10 | 10 | 0.09% | 11,639 | 3 | 3 | 0.03% |
| 36 | San Bernardino | 434,151 | 610 | 609 | 0.14% | 435,895 | 729 | 720 | 0.17% |
| 37 | San Diego | 529,961 | 335 | 331 | 0.06% | 530,021 | 315 | 311 | 0.06% |
| 38 | San Francisco | 72,696 | 4 | 4 | 0.01% | 71,740 | 5 | 5 | 0.01% |
| 39 | San Joaquin | 155,554 | 221 | 218 | 0.14% | 154,438 | 287 | 287 | 0.19% |
| 40 | San Luis Obispo | 36,228 | 58 | 58 | 0.16% | 36,284 | 57 | 57 | 0.16% |
| 41 | San Mateo | 98,576 | 57 | 56 | 0.06% | 98,587 | 68 | 68 | 0.07% |
| 42 | Santa Barbara | 71,517 | 56 | 56 | 0.08% | 71,412 | 58 | 57 | 0.08% |
| 43 | Santa Clara | 282,774 | 155 | 153 | 0.05% | 285,059 | 120 | 119 | 0.04% |
| 44 | Santa Cruz | 41,902 | 16 | 16 | 0.04% | 41,870 | 22 | 22 | 0.05% |
| 45 | Shasta | 27,951 | 29 | 29 | 0.10% | 27,852 | 27 | 27 | 0.10% |
| 46 | Sierra | 409 | 0 | 0 | 0.00% | 416 | 0 | 0 | 0.00% |
| 47 | Siskiyou | 6,232 | 10 | 10 | 0.16% | 6,216 | 14 | 14 | 0.23% |
| 48 | Solano | 66,936 | 98 | 98 | 0.15% | 67,044 | 123 | 123 | 0.18% |
| 49 | Sonoma | 73,409 | 74 | 74 | 0.10% | 73,680 | 76 | 75 | 0.10% |
| 50 | Stanislaus | 116,035 | 165 | 164 | 0.14% | 113,926 | 93 | 93 | 0.08% |
| 51 | Sutter | 25,285 | 123 | 107 | 0.42% | 23,984 | 102 | 86 | 0.36% |
| 52 | Tehama | 11,655 | 1 | 1 | 0.01% | 11,586 | 1 | 1 | 0.01% |
| 53 | Trinity | 1,883 | 1 | 1 | 0.05% | 1,674 | 0 | 0 | 0.00% |
| 54 | Tulare | 107,340 | 169 | 167 | 0.16% | 106,997 | 176 | 175 | 0.16% |
| 55 | Tuolumne | 6,405 | 10 | 10 | 0.16% | 6,391 | 10 | 10 | 0.16% |
| 56 | Ventura | 143,370 | 111 | 111 | 0.08% | 145,780 | 156 | 155 | 0.11% |
| 57 | Yolo | 31,317 | 9 | 9 | 0.03% | 31,243 | 5 | 5 | 0.02% |
| 58 | Yuba | 15,581 | 66 | 66 | 0.42% | 15,506 | 67 | 67 | 0.43% |

***Note.*** Adapted from Ed Data Education Data Partnerships https://www.ed-data.org/state/CA

APPENDIX C

## California Community School Enrollment

| Enrollment in California County Community Schools 2016-17 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **County Office of Education** | **School** | **Students Enrolled** | **County Office of Education** | **School** | **Students Enrolled** |
| Alameda County Office of Education | Alameda County Community | 242 | Orange County Department of Education | Access County Community | 2137 |
| Alpine County Office of Education | Opportunity Academy | 208 | Placer County Office of Education | Placer County Pathways Charter | 228 |
| Amador County Office of Education | County Community | 12 | Placer County Office of Education | Placer County Community Schools | 36 |
| Butte County Office of Education | Butte County Community - LEAD | 20 | Plumas County Office of Education | Plumas County Community | 7 |
| Calaveras County Office of Education | Calaveras River Academy | 28 | Riverside County Office of Education | Riverside County Education Academy | 243 |
| Calaveras County Office of Education | Oakendell Community | 16 | Riverside County Office of Education | Come Back Kids | 598 |
| Colusa County Office of Education | S. William Abel Community | 4 | Riverside County Office of Education | Riverside County Community | 302 |
| Contra Costa County Office of Education | Golden Gate Community Charter | 53 | Sacramento County Office of Education | Elinor Lincoln Hickey Jr./Sr. High | 97 |
| Del Norte County Office of Education | Del Norte Community | 35 | Sacramento County Office of Education | North Area Community | 144 |
| El Dorado County Office of Education | Charter Alternative Program (CAP) | 172 | Sacramento County Office of Education | Gerber Jr./Sr. High | 139 |
| El Dorado County Office of Education | Charter Community School Home Study Academy | 483 | San Benito County Office of Education | Pinnacles Community | 17 |
| Fresno County Office of Education | Violet Heintz Education Academy | 120 | San Bernardino County Office of Education | Community School/Independent Alternative Education | 601 |
| Glenn County Office of Education | William Finch | 69 | San Diego County Office of Education | Monarch | 283 |
| Humboldt County Office of Education | Eel River Community | 58 | San Diego County Office of Education | San Diego County Community | 598 |
| Humboldt County Office of Education | Eureka Community | 48 | San Francisco County Office of Education | S.F. County Civic Center Secondary | 107 |
| Humboldt County Office of Education | Southern Humboldt Community | 18 | San Joaquin County Office of Education | one.Charter | 223 |
| Imperial County Office of Education | Valley Academy | 209 | San Joaquin County Office of Education | San Joaquin Building Futures Academy | 143 |
| Inyo County Office of Education | Jill Kinmont Boothe | 3 | San Joaquin County Office of Education | San Joaquin County Community | 1035 |
| Kern County Office of Education | Kern County Community | 867 | San Joaquin County Office of Education | Venture Academy | 1616 |
| Lake County Office of Education | Lloyd Hance Community | 17 | San Luis Obispo County Office of Education | San Luis Obispo County Community | 124 |
| Los Angeles County Office of Education | Soledad Enrichment Action Charter High | 1038 | San Mateo County Office of Education | Gateway Center | 17 |
| Los Angeles County Office of Education | East Los Angeles County Community | 78 | San Mateo County Office of Education | Canyon Oaks Youth Center | 9 |
| Los Angeles County Office of Education | Renaissance County Community | 165 | Santa Barbara County Office of Education | Santa Barbara County Community | 27 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Madera County Superintendent of Schools | Madera County Independent Academy | 379 | Santa Clara County Office of Education | Santa Clara County Community | 88 |
| Madera County Superintendent of Schools | Enterprise Secondary | 10 | Santa Cruz County Office of Education | Santa Cruz County Community | 626 |
| Madera County Superintendent of Schools | Pioneer Technical Center | 175 | Solano County Office of Education | Division of Unaccompanied Children's Services (DUCS) | 15 |
| Marin County Office of Education | Marin's Community | 47 | Solano County Office of Education | Solano County Community | 45 |
| Marin County Office of Education | Phoenix Academy | 15 | Sonoma County Office of Education | Sonoma County Alternative Education Programs | 99 |
| Mariposa County Office of Education | County Community | 48 | Stanislaus County Office of Education | Stanislaus Alternative Charter | 454 |
| Mendocino County Office of Education | Mendocino County Community | 47 | Stanislaus County Office of Education | Stanislaus County Institute of Learning | 215 |
| Merced County Office of Education | Valley Merced Community | 235 | Stanislaus County Office of Education | John B. Allard | 124 |
| Merced County Office of Education | Valley Los Banos Community | 75 | Stanislaus County Office of Education | Petersen Alternative Center for Education | 194 |
| Merced County Office of Education | Valley Atwater Community | 70 | Sutter County Office of Education | Feather River Academy | 104 |
| Mono County Office of Education | TIOGA Community | N/A | Trinity County Office of Education | Trinity County Community | N/A |
| Mono County Office of Education | Sawtooth Ridge Community | 3 | Tulare County Office of Education | Tulare County Community | 63 |
| Mono County Office of Education | Jan Work Community | 15 | Tuolumne County Superintendent of Schools | Tuolumne County Community/ISP | 25 |
| Monterey County Office of Education | Salinas Community | 234 | Ventura County Office of Education | Gateway Community | 102 |
| Napa County Office of Education | Napa County Community | 123 | Yolo County Office of Education | Cesar Chavez Community | 87 |
| Nevada County Office of Education | Earle Jamieson Educational Options | 6 | Yuba County Office of Education | Thomas E. Mathews Community | 19 |

APPENDIX D

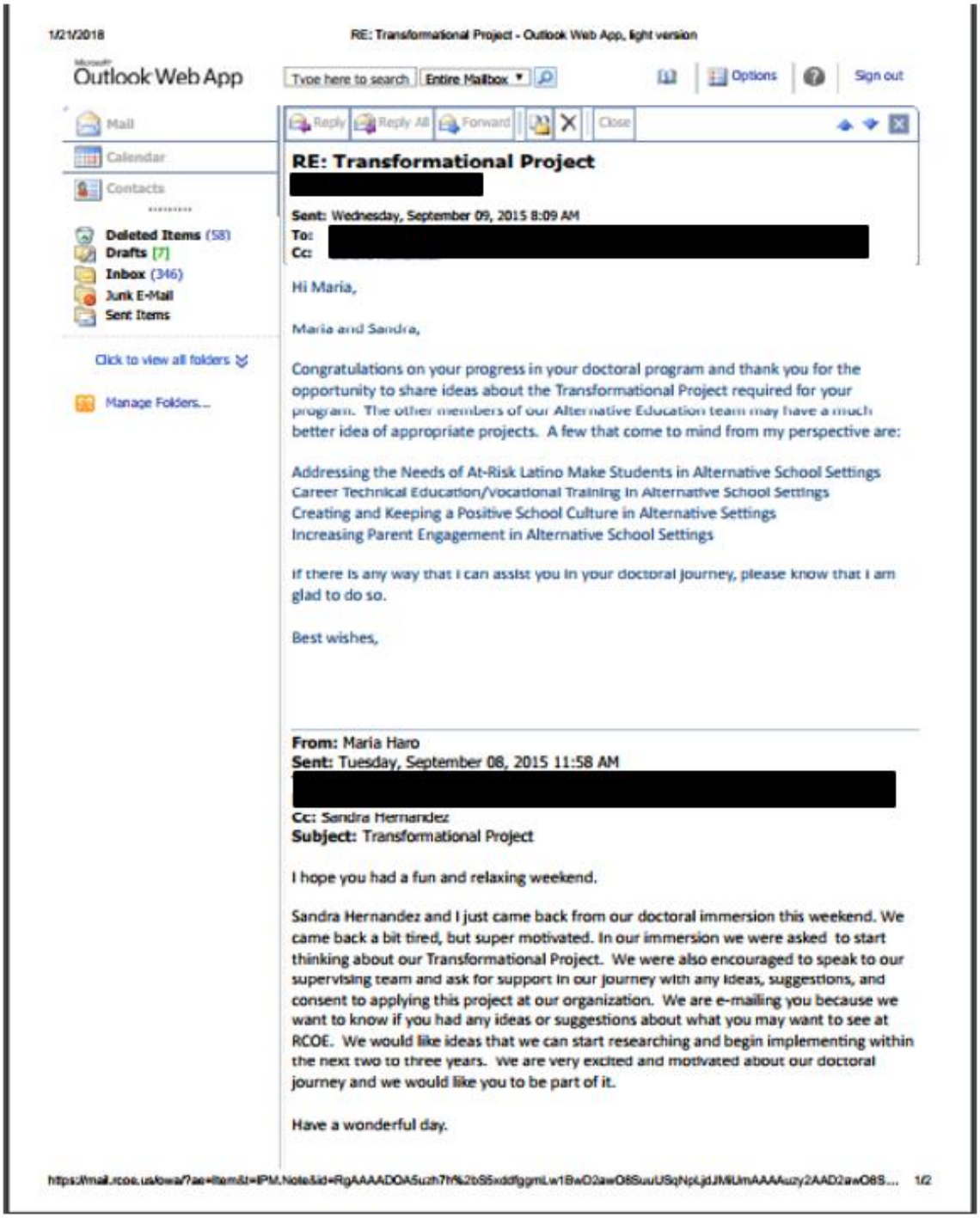
## California Community Schools Principal and Teacher Data

| Teachers and Principals in California County Community Schools 2014-15 | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **County Office of Education** | **Name of School** | **Teachers** | **Principals** | **County Office of Education** | **Name of School** | **Teachers** | **Principals** |
| Alameda County Office of Education | Alameda County Community | 17 | 2 | Orange County Department of Education | Access County Community | 138 | 19 |
| Alpine County Office of Education | Opportunity Academy | 1 | 0 | Placer County Office of Education | Placer County Pathways Charter | 22 | 0 |
| Amador County Office of Education | County Community | 4 | 1 | Placer County Office of Education | Placer County Community Schools | 3 | 0 |
| Butte County Office of Education | Butte County Community - LEAD | 3 | 1 | Plumas County Office of Education | Plumas County Community | 1 | 1 |
| Calaveras County Office of Education | Calaveras River Academy | 4 | 1 | Riverside County Office of Education | Riverside County Education Academy | N/A | N/A |
| Calaveras County Office of Education | Oakendell Community | 1 | 0 | Riverside County Office of Education | Come Back Kids | 13 | 2 |
| Colusa County Office of Education | S. William Abel Community | N/A | N/A | Riverside County Office of Education | Riverside County Community | 21 | 6 |
| Contra Costa County Office of Education | Golden Gate Community Charter | 8 | 2 | Sacramento County Office of Education | Elinor Lincoln Hickey Jr./Sr. High | 6 | 1 |
| Del Norte County Office of Education | Del Norte Community | 4 | 0 | Sacramento County Office of Education | North Area Community | 5 | 2 |
| El Dorado County Office of Education | Charter Alternative Program (CAP) | 10 | 0 | Sacramento County Office of Education | Gerber Jr./Sr. High | 6 | 2 |
| El Dorado County Office of Education | Charter Community School Home Study Academy | 33 | 2 | San Benito County Office of Education | Pinnacles Community | N/A | N/A |
| Fresno County Office of Education | Violet Heintz Education Academy | 4 | 2 | San Bernardino County Office of Education | Community School/Independent Alternative Education | 45 | 4 |
| Glenn County Office of Education | William Finch | 7 | 1 | San Diego County Office of Education | Monarch | 16 | 1 |
| Humboldt County Office of Education | Eel River Community | 3 | 0 | San Diego County Office of Education | San Diego County Community | 53 | 3 |
| Humboldt County Office of Education | Eureka Community | 6 | 1 | San Francisco County Office of Education | S.F. County Civic Center Secondary | 15 | 2 |
| Humboldt County Office of Education | Southern Humboldt Community | 1 | 0 | San Joaquin County Office of Education | one.Charter | 9 | 1 |
| Imperial County Office of Education | Valley Academy | 9 | 2 | San Joaquin County Office of Education | San Joaquin Building Futures Academy | 6 | 1 |
| Inyo County Office of Education | Jill Kinmont Boothe | 5 | 0 | San Joaquin County Office of Education | San Joaquin County Community | 51 | 3 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kern County Office of Education | Kern County Community | 64 | 6 | San Joaquin County Office of Education | Venture Academy | 71 | 3 |
| Lake County Office of Education | Lloyd Hance Community | 3 | 1 | San Luis Obispo County Office of Education | San Luis Obispo County Community | 12 | 3 |
| Los Angeles County Office of Education | Soledad Enrichment Action Charter High | 53 | 6 | San Mateo County Office of Education | Gateway Center | 8 | 1 |
| Los Angeles County Office of Education | East Los Angeles County Community | 22 | 15 | San Mateo County Office of Education | Canyon Oaks Youth Center | 2 | 0 |
| Los Angeles County Office of Education | Renaissance County Community | 20 | 12 | Santa Barbara County Office of Education | Santa Barbara County Community | 5 | 1 |
| Madera County Superintendent of Schools | Madera County Independent Academy | 16 | 1 | Santa Clara County Office of Education | Santa Clara County Community | 23 | 5 |
| Madera County Superintendent of Schools | Enterprise Secondary | 5 | 1 | Santa Cruz County Office of Education | Santa Cruz County Community | 35 | 1 |
| Madera County Superintendent of Schools | Pioneer Technical Center | 1 | 2 | Solano County Office of Education | Division of Unaccompanied Children's Services (DUCS) | 1 | 0 |
| Marin County Office of Education | Marin's Community | 6 | 1 | Solano County Office of Education | Solano County Community | 3 | 1 |
| Marin County Office of Education | Phoenix Academy | 3 | 1 | Sonoma County Office of Education | Sonoma County Alternative Education Programs | 9 | 2 |
| Mariposa County Office of Education | County Community | 3 | 1 | Stanislaus County Office of Education | Stanislaus Alternative Charter | 9 | 0 |
| Mendocino County Office of Education | Mendocino County Community | 8 | 1 | Stanislaus County Office of Education | Stanislaus County Institute of Learning | 13 | 1 |
| Merced County Office of Education | Valley Merced Community | 18 | 1 | Stanislaus County Office of Education | John B. Allard | 12 | 1 |
| Merced County Office of Education | Valley Los Banos Community | 9 | 1 | Stanislaus County Office of Education | Petersen Alternative Center for Education | 7 | 1 |
| Merced County Office of Education | Valley Atwater Community | 8 | 1 | Sutter County Office of Education | Feather River Academy | 8 | 2 |
| Mono County Office of Education | TIOGA Community | 1 | 0 | Trinity County Office of Education | Trinity County Community | N/A | N/A |
| Mono County Office of Education | Sawtooth Ridge Community | 1 | 0 | Tulare County Office of Education | Tulare County Community | 6 | 1 |
| Mono County Office of Education | Jan Work Community | 1 | 0 | Tuolumne County Superintendent of Schools | Tuolumne County Community/ISP | N/A | 0 |
| Monterey County Office of Education | Salinas Community | 15 | 1 | Ventura County Office of Education | Gateway Community | 9 | 1 |
| Napa County Office of Education | Napa County Community | 8 | 0 | Yolo County Office of Education | Cesar Chavez Community | 3 | 2 |

APPENDIX E

**RCOE Leadership Interest**



1/21/2018 RE: Transformational Project - Outlook Web App, light version

Outlook Web App

Type here to search | Entire Mailbox | Options | Sign out

Mail
Calendar
Contacts
Deleted Items (58)
Drafts [7]
Inbox (346)
Junk E-Mail
Sent Items
Click to view all folders
Manage Folders...

Reply | Reply All | Forward | Close

**RE: Transformational Project**

[redacted]

**Sent:** Wednesday, September 09, 2015 8:09 AM
**To:** [redacted]
**Cc:**

Hi Maria,

Maria and Sandra,

Congratulations on your progress in your doctoral program and thank you for the opportunity to share ideas about the Transformational Project required for your program. The other members of our Alternative Education team may have a much better idea of appropriate projects. A few that come to mind from my perspective are:

Addressing the Needs of At-Risk Latino Make Students in Alternative School Settings
Career Technical Education/Vocational Training in Alternative School Settings
Creating and Keeping a Positive School Culture in Alternative Settings
Increasing Parent Engagement in Alternative School Settings

If there is any way that I can assist you in your doctoral journey, please know that I am glad to do so.

Best wishes,

---

**From:** Maria Haro
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 08, 2015 11:58 AM
[redacted]
**Cc:** Sandra Hernandez
**Subject:** Transformational Project

I hope you had a fun and relaxing weekend.

Sandra Hernandez and I just came back from our doctoral immersion this weekend. We came back a bit tired, but super motivated. In our immersion we were asked to start thinking about our Transformational Project. We were also encouraged to speak to our supervising team and ask for support in our journey with any ideas, suggestions, and consent to applying this project at our organization. We are e-mailing you because we want to know if you had any ideas or suggestions about what you may want to see at RCOE. We would like ideas that we can start researching and begin implementing within the next two to three years. We are very excited and motivated about our doctoral journey and we would like you to be part of it.

Have a wonderful day.

https://mail.rcoe.us/owa/?ae=Item&t=IPM.Note&id=RgAAAADOA5uzh7hf%2bS5xddfggmLw1BwD2awO8SuuUSqNpLjdJMlUmAAAAuzy2AAD2awO8S... 1/2

APPENDIX F

## Invitation Letter to Potential Participants

Date

Dear Potential Participant:

Hello, my name is Sandra Luz Hernandez and I am a Doctoral Candidate at Brandman University's Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership Program. Currently, I am working on a dissertation that focuses on the need for parent engagement in county community schools. I am seeking the support of the community school teachers and principals who will support my research by participating in an interview.

The purpose of this research is to understand and explain how teachers and principals perceive parent engagement affects high school academic achievement within county operated community schools in Riverside County. An additional purpose is to understand and explain actions that teachers and principals believe are necessary to increase parent involvement within county operated community schools in Riverside County.

As a potential candidate, you are invited to participate in this research, because you were identified as a teacher/principal at a Riverside County Office of Education community school. Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without fear of repercussions. All information gathered from interviews will remain confidential. Participant names and schools will be numerically coded, and there are no identified risks to your participation in this study.

The interview will consist of eight open-ended questions, and will last approximately forty-five minutes to an hour. The results from this study will be used to further assist the alternative education system and to help increase the research on this topic.

Thank you, in advance. After making a decision, please fill out the letter of acceptance and return to researcher via email.

For further questions feel free to contact me by phone or email. My information is included at the bottom of this letter.

Respectfully,

Sandra

Sandra Luz Hernandez
hern1311@mail.brandman.edu
[redacted]
[redacted]

APPENDIX G

**Acceptance Letter to Participate**

I have read the purpose of your study and the intended need for my participation. In addition, I am aware that if I agree to participate and decide to withdraw from the study, I can do so without any repercussions. I understand that all interview information will be kept confidential and locked in a safe place. I have decided to

_____ Participate in this study

_____ Not participate at this time

_____

Name

_____

Contact Information

Please scan and email your decision to …

[redacted] or [redacted]

APPENDIX H

## Interview Guide

Exploring the Perceptions of Teachers and Principals on Parent Involvement in County Community School Students' Academic Achievement

### Part I: Read to Participant

I would like to thank you in advance for accepting to participate in this study. As you know, I am conducting a study focused on potential actions necessary to increase parent involvement in their childrens' education. Your personal experience in working with county community school students and parents is of interest to me, in how it has affected you. The study's objective is to explore your perception of actions necessary to increase parent involvement and how it affects student academic performance.

When I begin asking you the interview questions you are allowed to skip any questions or stop the interview at any point of discomfort. If there is a question you do not understand, please feel free to ask for clarification. Your experiences will help in the collection of data for alternative education future research.

### Part II: Demographic Questionnaire

Interview begins with simple demographic questions.

1. How many years of experience do you have in education?
2. How many years of experience do you have in alternative education?
3. How many years have you been employed in RCOE?
4. What is your current position?

**Part III: Interview questions**

1. In your experience as a teacher/principal how are parents involved in the classroom and school? How often are parents involved?
2. How do you invite parents to participate in your classroom or school functions? What types of activities have you created to collaborate with the parents?
3. What are some activities used in your classroom/school to make parents feel welcomed?
4. In regards to academic achievement, how do parents participate in their children's' education?
   4.1 What types of support or resources do you offer parents?
   4.2 What helps you identify parents who are prepared to help their children with schoolwork?
   4.3 What strategies, tips, suggestions, trainings, or materials do you offer parents that can help them assist their children?
   4.4 What are the barriers that you perceive to hinder parent engagement?
5. What actions do you take to listen to parents? How prepared do you feel you are to understand the Families' culture, language, goals, or financial conditions?
6. From your experience in working at community schools, what do you believe parents would like to see changed or added to help increase their interaction with the classrooms/school?
   6.1 In your experience in working with parents, what changes do you perceive are more important to be changed first?
7. In your experience in working with parents, what do you believe parents would like to see offered by the school to help them with supporting their children? Can you give me an example of an incident that ties to the example?
8. In your experience in working with parents, what do you believe parents would like to see changed or implemented to encourage other parents to become involved in the schools? Can you give me an example of an incident that ties to the example?

APPENDIX I

## Interview Questions and Types of Interview Questions

| | Interview Questions | Types of Interview Questions | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Experience/ Behavior** | **Opinion/Value** | **Feeling** | **Knowledge** | **Sensory** | **Background/ Demographic** |
| **1** | In your experience as a teacher/principal how are parents involved in the classroom and school? How often are parents involved? | X | | | X | | X |
| **2** | How do you invite parents to participate in your classroom or school functions? What types of activities have you created to collaborate with the parents? | X | | | X | X | X |
| **3** | What are some activities used in your classroom/school to make parents feel welcomed? | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| **4** | In regards to academic achievement, how do parents participate in their children's education?<br>**4.1** What types of support or resources do you offer parents?<br>**4.2** What helps you identify parents who are prepared to help their children with schoolwork?<br>**4.3** What strategies, tips, suggestions, trainings, or materials do you offer parents that can help them assist their children?<br>**4.4** What are the barriers that you perceive to hinder parent engagement? | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| **5** | What actions do you take to listen to parents? How prepared do you feel you are to understand the Families' culture, language, goals, or financial conditions? | X | | X | X | | |
| **6** | From your experience in working at community schools, what do you believe parents would like to see changed or added to help increase their interaction with the classrooms/school?<br>6.1 In your experience in working with parents, what changes do you perceive are more important to be changed first? | | X | | | | |
| **7** | In your experience in working with parents, what do you believe parents would like to see offered by the school to help them with supporting their children? Can you give me an example of an incident that ties to the example? | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| **8** | In your experience in working with parents, what do you believe parents would like to see changed or implemented to encourage other parents to become involved in the schools? Can you give me an example of an incident that ties to the example? | X | X | X | X | X | X |

APPENDIX J

## Interview Questions & Research Questions

| | Interview Questions | How do teachers and principals perceive parent engagement affects the academic achievement of high school students within the community schools in Riverside County? | | | What do teachers and principals perceive as the actions necessary for the community schools in Riverside County to implement to improve parent engagement to increase high school student achievement? | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1.1. How do teachers and principals perceive parents are, or are not, involved in supporting their child's academic achievement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County? | 1.2. What do teachers and principals perceive influence whether or not parents are engaged with their child's academic achievement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County? | 1.3. What supports or barriers do teachers and principals perceive exist that affect parent engagement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County? | 2.1. What actions do teachers and principals believe the county operated community schools in Riverside County can take to increase parent engagement to improve their child's academic achievement? | 2.2 What actions do principals and teachers believe are a priority to increase parent engagement to improve their child's academic achievement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County? |
| 1 | In your experience as a teacher/principal how are parents involved in the classroom and school? How often are parents involved? | X | | | | |
| 2 | How do you invite parents to participate in your classroom or school functions? What types of activities have you created to collaborate with the parents? | X | X | | | |
| 3 | What are some activities used in your classroom/school to make parents feel welcomed? | X | | | | |
| 4 | In regards to academic achievement, how do parents participate in their children's education?<br>**4.1** What types of support or resources do you offer parents?<br>**4.2** What helps you identify parents who are prepared to help their children with schoolwork?<br>**4.3** What strategies, tips, suggestions, trainings, or materials do you offer parents | X | X | X | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | that can help them assist their children? **4.4** What are the barriers that you perceive to hinder parent engagement? | | | | | |
| 5 | What actions do you take to listen to parents? How culturally prepared do you feel, to understand the families' language, goals, or financial conditions? | | | | X | X |
| 6 | From your experience in working at community schools, what do you believe parents would like to see changed or added to help increase their interaction with the classrooms/school? 6.1 In your experience in working with parents, what changes do you perceive are more important to be changed first? | | | | X | X |
| 7 | In your experience in working with parents, what do you believe parents would like to see offered by the school to help them with supporting their children? Can you give me an example of an incident that ties to the example? | | | | X | |
| 8 | In your experience in working with parents, what do you believe parents would like to see changed or implemented to encourage other parents to become involved in the schools? Can you give me an example of an incident that ties to the example? | | | | X | |

APPENDIX K

**Survey Critique by Field Test Participants**

As a doctoral student and researcher at Brandman University, your assistance is greatly appreciated in designing this interview instrument. Your participation is crucial to the development of a valid and reliable instrument. Below are some questions that I appreciate you answering after completing the interview. Your answers will assist me in refining both the directions and the interview questions. You have been provided with a paper copy of the interview questions, just to remind you if needed. Thank you.

1. How many minutes did it take you to complete the interview, from beginning to the ending of the interview? _____

2. Did you have any concerns when you read the consent information explained in the first part of interview? _____If so, would you briefly state your concern
   _____
   _____

3. Was the Introduction adequate in size and clear when informing you about the purpose of the study? _____ If not, what recommendations do you have for modification?
   _____
   _____

4. Was the method of interview comfortable for you? _____Which method did you choose? _____. If not, would you briefly state the problem
   _____
   _____

5. Did you feel comfortable answering the interview questions? _____. If not, which question/s would you suggest to be revised_____
   _____
   _____

Thank you for your help

APPENDIX L

## Invitation Letter

Congratulations, your participation in interview is confirmed. You were selected from the random sample of potential candidates. You are cordially invited to follow the next steps in preparation for the interview. Included is the purpose statement for the study and the research questions. Please read and reminisce on your current position as a county community school employee, who works with at-risk youth. You will soon be receiving an email with all the possible dates and times for interviews.

## Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand and explain how teachers and principals perceive parent engagement affects high school academic achievement within county operated community schools in Riverside County California. An additional purpose of the study was to understand and explain actions that teachers and principals believe are necessary to increase parent involvement within county operated community schools in Riverside County.

## Research Questions

This study was guided by two central questions. Each central question was divided into sub-questions.

### Central Question 1

Central Question 1 asked: *How do teachers and principals perceive parent engagement affects the academic achievement of high school students within the community schools in Riverside County?*

**Sub-Question 1**. There were three sub-questions designed to answer Central Question 1.

1.1. How do teachers and principals perceive parents are, or are not, involved in supporting their child's academic achievement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County?

1.2. What do teachers and principals perceive influence whether or not parents are engaged with their child's academic achievement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County?

1.3. What supports or barriers do teachers and principals perceive exist that affect parent engagement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County?

**Central Question 2**

Central Question 2 asked: *What do teachers and principals perceive as the actions necessary for the community schools in Riverside County to implement to improve parent engagement to increase high school student achievement?*

**Sub-Question 2**. There were three sub-questions designed to answer Central Question 2.

2.1. What actions do teachers and principals believe the county operated community schools in Riverside County can take to increase parent engagement to improve their child's academic achievement.

2.2 What actions do principals and teachers believe need to be implemented first to increase parent engagement to improve their child's academic achievement within the county operated community schools in Riverside County?

APPENDIX M

## Informed Consent

**INFORMATION ABOUT:** Exploring the Perceptions of Teachers and Principals on Parent Involvement in County Community School Students' Academic Achievement

**RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR:** Sandra Luz Hernandez

**PURPOSE OF STUDY:** You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Sandra Luz Hernandez, a doctoral student at Brandman University. The purpose of this research study is to explore how the involvement of parents in their children's' education affects their academic performance. The study will attempt to determine the actions necessary to increase parental involvement, as perceived by principals and teachers in county community schools. This study will help fill in the gap in the research in data collection on alternative education schools and programs. The results of this study may assist districts in the designing of activities to help increase collaboration between schools and parents in support of student academic achievement.

By participating in this study I agree to participate in an *individual interview.* The interview(s) will last approximately 30-45 minutes and will be conducted by *in person, phone, electronically using zoom.*

I understand that:

a) There are minimal risks associated with participating in this research. I understand that the Investigator will protect my confidentiality by keeping the identifying codes and research materials in a locked file drawer that is available only to the researcher and dissertation chair.

b) I understand that the interview will be audio recorded. The recordings will be available only to the researcher and the professional transcriptionist. The audio recordings will be used to capture the interview dialogue and to ensure the accuracy of the information collected during the interview. All information will be identifier-redacted and my confidentiality will be maintained. Upon completion of the study all recordings, transcripts and notes taken by the researcher and transcripts from the interview will be destroyed.

c) The possible benefit of this study to me is that my input may help add to the research regarding county community schools and programs pertaining to the student academic achievement. The findings will be available to me at the conclusion of the study and will provide new insights about the perceptions of principals and teachers in county community schools. I understand that I will not be compensated for my participation.

d) If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Sandra Luz Hernandez at hern1311@mail.brandman.edu or by phone at [redacted] or Dr. Patrick Ainsworth (Dissertation Chair) at painsconsult@gmail.com.

e) My participation in this research study is voluntary. I may decide to not participate in the study and I can withdraw at any time. I can also decide not to answer particular questions during the interview if I so choose. I understand that I may refuse to participate or may withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the Investigator may stop the study at any time.

f) No information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent re-obtained. I understand that if I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the "Research Participant's Bill of BUIRB Written Informed Consent Revised October 10, 2017 6 Rights." I have read the above and understand it and hereby consent to the procedure(s) set forth.

_____

Signature of Participant or Responsible Party Date

_____

Printed Name of Participant or Responsible Party Date

_____

Signature of Principal Investigator Date

APPENDIX N

**Research Participant's Bill of Rights**

## BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
### Research Participant's Bill of Rights

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.

2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.

3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.

4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.

5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.

6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.

7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.

8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.

9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.

10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the Brandman University Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The Brandman University Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.

APPENDIX O

**Video/Audio Tape Consent Form**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand and explain how teachers and principals perceive parent engagement affects high school academic achievement within county operated community schools in Riverside County California. An additional purpose of the study was to understand and explain actions that teachers and principals believe are necessary to increase parent engagement within county operated community schools in Riverside County.

The interview portion of the study will be audio-recorded, and the recordings will not be used beyond the scope of this project. The audio recordings will be used to transcribe the interviews. Once the interviews are transcribed, the investigator will keep the audio and electronic interview transcripts for a minimum of five years.

I / We consent to the excerpts from these recordings, or descriptions of them, being used by Ms. Sandra Hernandez for the purposes of her dissertation research study. The recordings will be available only to the researcher and the professional transcriptionist. The audio recordings will be used to capture the interview dialogue and to ensure the accuracy of the information collected during the interview. All information will be identifier-redacted and my confidentiality will be maintained. Upon completion of the study all recordings, transcripts and notes taken by the researcher and transcripts from the interview will be destroyed.

Dated _____ Signed _____

I undertake that, in respect of any video/audio tapes made, every effort will be made to ensure professional confidentiality and that any use of video/audio tapes, or descriptions of video/audio tapes. Every effort will be made to protect the anonymity of all those involved in the interviews.

Dated _____ Signed _____
Researcher