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Barriers That Exemplary Principals Have Overcome to Increase
Parent Participation at the School Site

A Dissertation by
Sandra Quintanilla

University of Massachusetts Global
A Private Nonprofit Affiliate of the University of Massachusetts
Irvine, California
School of Education

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

February 2024

Committee in charge:

Linda Kimble, Ed.D., Committee Chair

Alan Enomoto, Ed.D.

Jennifer Slater-Sanchez, Ed.D.

University of Massachusetts Global
A Nonprofit Affiliate of the University of Massachusetts
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

The dissertation of Sandra Quintanilla is approved.

 _____, Dissertation Chair

Linda Kimble, Ed.D.

 _____, Committee Member

Alan Enomoto, Ed.D.

 _____, Committee Member

Jennifer Slater-Sanchez, Ed.D.

 _____, Associate Dean

Patrick Ainsworth, Ed.D.

February 2024

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ABSTRACT

Barriers That Exemplary Principals Have Overcome to Increase

Parent Participation at the School Site

By Sandra Quintanilla

Purpose: The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the barriers exemplary principals have overcome to increase parent involvement at their school sites. This study explored how principals develop strategies to overcome barriers impeding parent involvement. Using those strategies, principals enhance parent involvement at their school sites.

Methodology: A phenomenological qualitative study was conducted, consisting of interviews to collect data from elementary school principals who have successful parent involvement at their school sites. First, the principals were interviewed in 60 min sessions. The data collected were analyzed to understand individuals' beliefs and motivation.

Findings: Data analysis revealed that exemplary principals incorporate Epstein's (2011) six type of parental involvement to ensure they are providing various opportunities for parents to be involved. They provide parents with parenting classes, communicate with families in various ways, provide parents with multiple volunteer opportunities, provide parents with educational workshops, invite parents to be part of the decision-making process, and collaborate with the community.

Conclusion: Exemplary principals know that being a principal requires them to be open to planning school events differently than what was done in the past. They understand that the family dynamics continuously change and therefore they have to plan

accordingly. They are visible in the community and know that it takes time and effort to build relationships with parents. In doing so, these exemplary principals maintain active parental involvement and are able to sustain it.

Recommendations: Recommendations include partnering with outside agencies to provide effective parenting classes for parents and collaborating with the community to provide resources to families. Research needs to include learning more about what various districts do to communicate effectively with families who speak various languages. This study should be replicated by expanding the sample size of exemplary principals who have overcome barriers to increase parental involvement at their school site.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Increasing parental involvement has been identified as both a key to school success and a challenge for principals for many years (Buddy, 2012; Lynch, 2021; Patte, 2002). In recent years, government agencies, policymakers, educators, researchers, and other members of the educational community have focused on encouraging parents to participate in their child's education (Patte, 2002). Parent engagement in schools is a requirement of state and federal law (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Schools are required to demonstrate they are putting an effort into involving parents at their sites. Many of these programs determine funding for their educational institutions (California Department of Education [CDE], 2023). Because there is a great need for parents to be involved, schools scramble to find effective parent engagement opportunities (Baker et al., 2016). Many school principals, teachers, and educational partners try to understand and find ways to increase parent participation throughout their campus (Lynch, 2021).

Parent involvement requires parents to make some type of contact with their child's school (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; Pomerantz et al., 2007). Parent involvement may come in the form of attending meetings or school events and volunteering. However, schools often fail to provide parents with opportunities to be engaged at the school site (Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020). Gross et al. (2020) found that those who plan school events may not always have the parents' needs in mind. Schools often plan activities without any parental input and make it difficult for parents to be involved. School leaders tend to schedule events on days and times that are convenient for them but have not considered the needs of the families within their communities (MacPhee, 2021). Powers (2016) stated, "Children gain the most from their early education experience when a

partnership exists between teachers and families” (p. 2). Providing opportunities for parents to be involved can enhance the relationships between parents and the school. Walker (2016) found creating programs that engage parents benefits the school in that families who are engaged increase their knowledge of various ways they can be involved.

Welcoming parents onto the school site and actively engaging them supports the academic success of the students (Fitriani & Istaryatiningtias, 2020). School principals need to find ways to overcome the barriers that impede parent participation (Gross et al., 2020). By finding solutions to the barriers, schools will begin to see an increase in parent involvement at their school sites. Without support from families, some schools have a hard time reaching some of their students (Wong, 2015). To increase parent involvement at their schools, principals need to know what strategies are most effective for overcoming barriers and implementing effective parent engagement.

Background Parent Participation/Engagement at the School Site

In 2007, Pomerantz et al. published a study containing a broad definition of parental involvement. They identified the following:

School-based involvement represents practices on the part of parents that require their making actual contact with schools. Practices in this vein include but are not limited to being present in general school meetings, talking with teachers (e.g., attending parent-teacher conferences, initiating contact with teachers), attending school events (e.g., open house, science, and fairs), and volunteering at school. (p. 347)

Importantly, research shows that students whose parents are involved show more academic success and higher aspirations. A study by Hillier (2021) found that parent engagement could inspire higher achievement for various reasons. Hillier stated,

There are three possible explanations. First, high student achievement spurs higher aspirations, and therefore, this is an instance of reverse causation. Second, parents' aspirations have a causal effect on student achievement. Third, it is possible that the relationship is reciprocal; parents who "aspire" have children who do better, which then encourages parents to aspire higher. (p. 515)

Parent involvement is often associated with how parents can influence the success of their children.

Parent Involvement and Engagement

There are two terms used and discussed in this area: parent involvement and parent engagement. Gross et al. (2020) stated that "parent engagement in early learning has historically been defined quite broadly, and it is often unclear whether those designing, implementing, evaluating, or participating in parent engagement initiatives conceptualize parent engagement in the same way" (p. 747).

Ogg et al. (2021) found that parent involvement can be looked at in various ways. In their research, they identified three different types, "home-based involvement, school-based involvement, and home-school communication" (p. 143). In each case, the terms engagement and involvement are meant to cover both the engagement of the parents with the school and teachers who interact with their children and the parents' direct involvement with their children's education process. Activities of family engagement

should support children in ways that are directed toward meaningful learning and positive educational outcomes (Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020).

Benefits of Parent Engagement

Parents who are involved in the education of their children have children who demonstrate more academic and social success (Ryan et al., 2010). A study by Cheung (2019) stated that parents who are involved in their child's learning at an early age tend to have adolescent students who continue to do well in school.

There is evidence that parents who are involved in various ways are more likely to raise academically motivated children. Schools where parent participation is evident have supportive teachers and administrators. These partnerships ensure parents are involved and have seen an increase in student performance (Lindberg, 2014).

Welcoming Schools

Fitriani and Istaryatiningtias (2020) emphasized the importance of schools providing welcoming environments for parents because when parents contribute and are part of their children's education, they positively impact their education. A form of resolving the barriers that impede a welcoming environment is providing the support needed at the school site (Galindo & Sheldon, 2012). When schools provide solutions to the barriers, it is easier for parents to be involved (Baker et al., 2016). Parents often need better communication from the schools, weekend events, and childcare to be involved (Baker et al., 2016; Lawson, 2018; Lynch, 2021).

Studies have shown that many families have commitments that impede them from being involved in school activities, but they may be able to attend if schools had solutions to these barriers (Baker et al., 2016). Any way a parent can be involved will increase the

quality of their children's education (Baker et al., 2016; Fitriani & Istaryatiningtias, 2020; M. Lim, 2012; Pomerantz et al., 2007). Likewise, Sakamoto (2021) found parent participation improves educational quality and outcomes.

Barriers to Parent Engagement

Even though it has been widely studied for decades, the correlation between parent engagement and students' success remains an abstract idea that is still ignored or impeded in many school districts. Many times, both parties blame each other. Lynch (2021) stated that often parents and schools seemed to place emphasis on responsibility on the other party for the lack of effort to establish a more positive home-school engagement. In studies where barriers were identified, it was noted that parents do not participate in school activities because of barriers and not because they lack interest in their child's education (Baker et al., 2016; Shiffman, 2013; Walker, 2016). A study conducted by Hernandez (2010) found that when parents were not involved, it was because of working hours and other commitments at home.

In studies conducted by Lawson (2018), Kelty and Wakabayashi (2020), MacPhee (2021), and Jung (2011), the researchers sought to find a better understanding of the needs of parents when it came to being involved at the school site. The researchers found barriers that impede parents from participating, such as language barriers, unwelcoming schools, scheduling conflicts, and activities created in a traditional way, that did not work for diverse families.

Moreover, according to Georgis et al. (2014), parents reported many barriers that impede them from being active at their child's school. For instance, if schools do not

have systems in place to assist these families, most parents prefer not to attend. Many families need schools to provide child care and transportation to be able to attend.

Factors that impede parent involvement have included certain identifiable behaviors. In studies conducted by Ryan et al. (2010) and Baker et al. (2016), barriers such as language fluency were identified in working with Latino parents. It was noted that Latino families preferred to help their children at home rather than at the school site so that language would not impede their effectiveness. It was also noted by Hernandez (2010) that there are times when schools do not realize that immigrant parents can feel left out when all communication from the school is conducted in English. Many of these families have a language barrier that can impede them from communicating with teachers or attending school functions (Jung, 2011; MacPhee, 2021).

Federal Requirements Under Title I

Parent engagement is pivotal at school sites. Research supports the strong correlation between parental involvement and student success (Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020). That is why policymakers have included participation and involvement in educational initiatives and reforms (Wilder, 2014).

The two most recent reauthorizations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) have included specific requirements regarding parents being part of their child's education. The Title I program is a federally funded program originally authorized under the ESEA of 1965 and periodically reauthorized since then. The purpose of Title I is to improve basic programs operated by school districts and county offices that consult with teachers, principals, pupil services personnel, administrators, other staff, and parents (CDE, 2023).

No Child Left Behind

The 2001 reauthorization of ESEA, known as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), deepened parental involvement requirements. It made specific provisions involving parental involvement (CDE, 2023). One emphasis in the NCLB Act was for schools to create plans to increase parental involvement. Specifics were detailed on how to increase parental involvement and the importance of making families be participants in their child's education. The NCLB Act came to an end in 2015. However, a new act was put into place, which continued the emphasis on parental involvement.

The Every Child Succeeds Act

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed by President Obama on December 10, 2015. ESSA replaced NCLB as the latest reauthorization of ESEA. ESSA requires schools to develop a parent and family engagement policy. It also requires schools to adhere to the parent involvement requirements. Schools receiving Title I funds are held accountable for creating and maintaining opportunities for parents to be involved in their child's education (CDE, 2023). Furthermore, an emphasis was placed on how parents needed to be involved, informed, and share in the decision-making process at the school site. Schools are held accountable for creating these opportunities for the families they serve.

Local Control Funding Formula

The Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) is part of the local control accountability plan. Within the LCFF, there is a budget overview for parent involvement. The CDE (2023) also has a focus on family involvement. The LCFF Priority 3 of the LCFF provides resources to include Family Engagement in decision making and

promotion of family participation in the education process for all students, including those with disabilities. The desired results are to ensure all parents and families from preschool through grade 12 have the resources and opportunities that allow them to participate in the planning and decision making at school sites. Within the focus, various model practices promote parental involvement, which includes building and sustaining respectful and trusting relationships with families.

Theoretical Foundations of Child Development

Interest in parent involvement in their children's education as an educational benefit to students is not new (Powers, 2016). In the United States, at the beginning of the 20th century, parents began to show interest in nursery schools in being active participants at their child's school (Tekin, 2011). Theories by Vygotsky (1962) and Piaget (1981) supported the value of parental involvement in fostering the development of children.

Sociocultural Development Theory

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory focuses on social interactions and how parents can assist their children's learning (Nardo, 2021). In sociocultural theory, there is a concept referred to as internalization. It is believed that internalization allows individuals to learn from their interactions with others, and then the individual can use what they have learned later in life (Yaghoubi & Farrokh, 2022). Sociocultural theory can be an open-ended process, and what is learned can constantly change depending on feelings, personal relationships, and interactions with others (L. Lim & Renshaw, 2001).

Furthermore, Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) relates to a person learning from others, and it is often the theory that is discussed in the educational setting

(Miller, 2011; Nardo, 2021). ZPD discusses what a child can do on their own and how adult guidance, such as that of a parent, can allow the child to learn from others. It is clear that parental involvement in a child's learning can influence their way of interacting with others.

Cognitive Development Theory

Another theorist, Piaget (1981), developed the theory of cognitive development in children and focused on the role of experience with peers and family members. His theory states young children actively learn from others as they interact with them (Tekin, 2011). Piaget focused on the interaction between children and how their experiences can help children to develop structures for processing environmental input (Hakvoort, 2002). Piaget suggested that children continue to change as they grow, and their cognitive development is developed through those changes (Miller, 2011). Parent involvement throughout their learning can help a child learn and develop academically.

Theoretical Framework: Epstein's Parent Involvement Model: Six Types of Parent Involvement

For over 30 years, Epstein has been working on ways to increase the partnership between schools, parents, and communities. Her work in researching parent involvement at schools began at the elementary school level in 1981, and she continues to work closely with district leaders and educators at all policy levels (Epstein, 2011). Through her work, Epstein created a framework of six types of parent involvement: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community (Epstein, 2011; Sheldon & Epstein, 2007). The following is a brief description of each of the six types of parent involvement:

- Parenting: Help all families establish home environments to support children as students.
- Communicating: Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress.
- Volunteering: Recruit and organize parent help and support.
- Learning at home: Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.
- Decision making: Include families as participants in school decisions and develop parent leaders and representatives.
- Collaborating with the community: Coordinate resources and services from the community for families, students, and the school, and provide services to the community.

Elementary Principals

School principals must accomplish various duties as part of their roles as school leaders. Principals lead the school community, ensure students meet grade-level standards, and ensure students are in a safe and welcoming environment.

A critical role of elementary school principals is finding ways to engage families and evaluating whether those activities are successful (Broome, 2018; McDowall & Schaughency, 2017). Ensuring they are gathering information from other education leaders can support principals in creating positive opportunities for parents to participate. Gross et al. (2020) stated that ensuring activities are engaging for families creates a more significant meaning and quality to the opportunities provided to families.

Finding ways to successfully engage parents should be a priority for school principals. In a country known for being a melting pot, schools need to make welcoming multicultural families a key focus (Walker et al., 2011; Wong, 2015). According to MacPhee (2021), “Immigrant parents have a greater need to feel welcomed, and they experience greater language disparity, making communication with the school challenging” (p. 35). Finding various ways to involve parents in schools is key to creating a supportive and positive learning environment for students. When schools, parents, and communities work together, children tend to do better in school.

Problems Identified Through Literature

Research has indicated that parental involvement correlates with student success (Hillier, 2021). However, significant work still needs to be done in schools (Lawson, 2018). Walker (2016) found that creating programs that engage parents benefits the school in that families increase their knowledge of various ways they can be involved.

Schools can create partnerships with families to help reduce barriers that distance families from schools. Creating partnerships between teachers and families has been shown to help develop the most gain in children early in their education (Powers, 2016). Providing opportunities can enhance the relationships between parents and schools. Sakamoto (2021) found that when parents see that schools are transparent, they want to be involved in the decision making to improve the quality of education at their schools. They want to ensure schools have enough resources to support student learning and that students are receiving what they deserve. In a study conducted by Lynch (2021), parents felt that with better communication between the school and home, parents know what is going on in schools and have better opportunities for involvement.

Strategies to increase parent engagement were identified by Kelty and Wakabayashi (2020). These included home visits by staff, parent liaisons for the schools, child care, and offering day-long learning opportunities for parents on Saturdays. For schools with a large number of immigrant parents, providing translation helps families feel welcome. Parents often have work commitments that get in the way of making it to school events. Improving communication promptly helps provide opportunities for more parents to be involved (Baker et al., 2016; Gross et al., 2020; Lynch, 2021; MacPhee, 2021). Baker et al. (2016) and Yulianti et al. (2020) found that understanding barriers to parent involvement was insufficient to increase parent engagement unless the barriers were addressed. It was noted that school staff members need to change their attitudes regarding parent engagement, improve communication methods, and have leaders who invest time in professional development to prepare teachers to engage and work well with parents.

To support active parent involvement, the school staff needs to know their population. By knowing the families in the community and identifying their needs, school staff can plan better when they schedule events (Baker et al., 2016). According to Fitriani and Istaryatiningtias (2020), “Not only does the school need to provide such an environment, but also parents’ contribution has profound impacts. The involvement of parents in any kind of form is empirically proven in quality education” (p. 1026).

Parents in the United States have been involved in their children’s education since the 20th century, but this remains minimal (Tekin, 2011). Principals are tasked with finding strategies to strengthen parent engagement by decreasing the barriers that impede parents from being active participants at the school site (Heilig, 2023). Although the

literature has identified some barriers to parent involvement in schools and effective engagement strategies, further research is needed to identify strategies that effective principals can use to overcome those barriers.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to identify the barriers exemplary elementary principals encountered as they sought to improve parent engagement at their school sites. A secondary purpose of this study was to identify and describe the strategies they used to overcome the identified barriers to implement and maintain successful parent engagement at their school sites.

Research Question

What are the lived experiences of exemplary principals who have successful parent engagement at their school sites?

Research Subquestions

1. What barriers do exemplary elementary principals encounter as they seek to improve parent engagement at their school sites?
2. What strategies do exemplary elementary principals use to overcome the identified barriers to implement and maintain successful parent engagement at their school sites?

Significance of the Problem

For the past several decades, the role of parents in their child's education has been the focus of various studies. This, in turn, has led to several adjustments regarding how to best define the role of the parents as well as the ways that schools and school districts should work to include parents (Walker, 2016). Sakamoto (2021) found parent

participation improves education quality and outcomes. School administrators continue to seek ways to successfully implement parent engagement at their schools.

Pomerantz et al. (2007) studied parent engagement at the school site. In their study, they concluded that in general, students whose parents had even a minimal level of involvement tended to be more successful at school than those whose parents did not. Additionally, the students of involved parents tend to set higher goals for themselves than those whose parents had little or no involvement in their schooling (Fitriani & Istaryatiningtias, 2020; Sakamoto, 2021). Hillier (2021) and Buddy (2012) also found that students whose parents are more involved inspire children who do better in school, demonstrating that parent involvement encourages higher aspirations from students.

In 2010, Ryan et al. published a study that supported that parents involved in their children's education have children who tend to be more academically and socially successful. In reviewing the pertinent literature, Lindberg (2014) found that schools with greater parent participation have administrators and teachers who ensure that parents are involved and are able to see a measurable increase in student performances.

Even though it has been widely studied for decades, parent engagement remains limited in many school districts. There are several reasons for this. In studies conducted by Buddy (2012), Lawson (2018), Kelty and Wakabayashi (2020), and MacPhee (2021), the researchers sought to find a better understanding of the needs of parents when it came to being involved in the school site. The researchers found there were barriers that impede parents from participating. Some of those barriers included unwelcoming schools, language barriers, scheduling conflicts, and time (Baker et al., 2016; Hernandez, 2010; Ryan et al., 2010). Studies have also shown that in some school environments,

engagement opportunities were created in traditional ways that do not meet the needs of diverse communities (Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020).

The aim of this study was to find what exemplary principals are doing at their school sites to overcome the barriers that impede parent engagement and what strategies they have used to successfully maintain parent engagement at their schools. Elementary principals could use the findings of this study in their own schools to promote and increase parent engagement to improve the academic success of their students. School districts and county education offices can also use the findings as tools to guide them during staff professional development for parent engagement. Furthermore, the results of the study may be used as a guide for educational partners to facilitate and design parent engagement workshops.

Definitions of Key Terms

Academic success. Achievement of success because of the involvement and partnerships of their parents (Powers, 2016).

Barriers. Obstacles that impede families from being involved and/or engaged at the school site. This may include scheduling conflicts, language, transportation, etc. (Hernandez, 2010; MacPhee, 2021).

Exemplary principals. For the purpose of this study, exemplary principals have attained parent engagement at their school site, which is a model for other principals. Other principals desire their school's parent engagement.

Parent engagement. Parents and schools work together to increase the academic outcome of their child's success. Parents participate in their child's educational journey while creating a school-family partnership (Gross et al., 2020; MacPhee, 2021).

Parent involvement. Parent involvement requires parents to make some type of contact with their child’s school. This involvement can be accomplished home-based, school-based, or home-school-based (Pomerantz et. al, 2007).

School-family partnerships. Creating programs and opportunities that encourage parents to be involved and work with school staff. School partnerships have been demonstrated to impact academic success (Walker, 2016).

Title I. The CDE (2023) stated,

The Title I program is a federally funded program authorized under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 as reauthorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The State Educational Agency (SEA) shall award grants to geographically diverse local educational agencies (LEAs). In making such awards, the State Educational Agency shall prioritize awards to LEAs serving the highest percentage of schools identified by the State for comprehensive support and improvement or implementing targeted support and improvement plans. The purpose is to ensure all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach minimum proficiency. (para. 1)

Delimitations

The target population for this study consisted of exemplary principals who met the following criteria:

1. The participants have been at their school sites for 3 years or more.
2. The participants are principals at elementary schools that serve students from preschool through fifth grade.

3. The participants were employed at a K–12 school district in Los Angeles, California.
4. The participants were recommended as exemplary principals in school leadership by their schools' director, principal supervisor, or colleague. The participants had 10% or more participants of their student population attending their activities and workshops on a constant basis.
5. The participants have been recognized during principal meetings as having exemplary and consistent parent involvement at their school sites with high numbers of parent portal participation.

Organization of the Study

This study includes five chapters in which the barriers exemplary principals have overcome to increase parent participation at their school sites have been studied. Included in Chapter I are the introduction of the study, background, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, and key terms. Chapter II consists of the literature review used for this study. Chapter III describes the methodology used for the study, including the population, setting, collection of data, and analysis of data. Chapter IV provides the results of the data collected. Chapter V provides the conclusion of the study and recommendations.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter II provides an extensive review of the literature and research conducted on the barriers that exemplary elementary principals have overcome to increase parent participation at the school site. This chapter also explores the various conceptual and theoretical frameworks used in research on parents participating at the school site. Epstein's (2011) parent involvement model (i.e., parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community) is discussed because this model has been used by many to help promote and maintain parents at their school sites. Epstein's six types of parent involvement were used as the conceptual framework throughout this study.

Parents play an important part in the educational success of their children. Parent involvement and its impact on a child's academic success have been researched and studied for years (Broome, 2018). This phenomenological study aimed to identify the barriers that exemplary elementary principals encountered as they sought to improve parental engagement at their school sites. Through this study, I also identified and described the strategies principals used to overcome the identified barriers to implement and maintain successful parent engagement at their campus.

Researchers who have conducted studies on parent involvement have identified barriers that prevent parents from participating in school events. The common barriers that have been reported are conflicting work and family life schedules, language, cultural differences, and a lack of understanding of the real-life experiences of families. In a study conducted by Lynch (2021), some educators believed parents are not engaged or involved because parents reported intimidation, being frustrated, not understanding the school

system, or simply not understanding educational jargon. This chapter reflects on the research conducted on parent involvement in schools through the literature reviewed.

A synthesis matrix (see Appendix A) was created to support this literature review. The articles collected reflect the importance and influence that parent involvement has on student achievement. The resources documented on the matrix also defend the strategies that principals have used to overcome barriers to have successful parent participation at their schools. It provides background, historical information, benefits of parent involvement, barriers impeding parents from participating, and what school principals can do to overcome these barriers.

Background and Historical Perspectives on Parent Engagement

Parent involvement has been a topic that has been discussed by theorists, administrators, and the U.S. Congress throughout the years (Crew, 2007). Parent involvement is important in developing children's learning (Gross et al., 2020; Powers, 2016; Wilder, 2014). Before the start of public schools, children were educated at home and learned from their parents (Rapp & Duncan, 2012). Once schools began to open, they were only available for some students and for those with higher socioeconomic status. Parents were part of the decision-making process at these schools, and parents were a big part of the decisions that were made (L. Lim & Renshaw, 2001).

Initially, students in schools were primarily White children educated through church-supported schools, private tutoring, or home-schooling (Center on Education Policy, 2020). Soon after the American Revolution, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams proposed the creation of more formal, publicly funded schools. In the 1830s, Horace Mann, a Massachusetts legislator, proposed public education for all. Educating those of

lower socioeconomic status was believed to prepare them for the work field and help the economy. In the 19th century, public education became more common in rural areas. Children of color, girls, and children with special needs took longer to gain the same education as White male children.

Not until much later did more states accept the responsibility to educate all children (Center on Education Policy, 2020). Project Head Start, the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965, The Education for All Handicapped Act of 1974, the NCLB Act of 1965, and the ESSA of 2015 are federally funded programs that have helped promote the need for parent involvement. The U.S. Department of Education (n.d.) defined parents as the student's first teachers. Children's learning is best supported when parents and schools collaborate.

Benefits of Parent Involvement & Engagement in Elementary School

Hillier (2021) found that parent engagement could inspire higher achievement; one of the reasons this is possible is that students who see their parents involved want to aspire for more, and those children aim to do better for their parents. Reece et al. (2013) stated that "In general, youth whose parents are involved in their schooling experience better academic outcomes" (p. 207). Epstein (2018) found that children feel influenced to do better in school when their parents are involved. Parental involvement highly impacts student success (M. Lim, 2012; Powers, 2016).

Domina (2005) stated that children benefit from three mechanisms when their parents are involved in school. First, the parents who are involved send a message to their children that they should put importance on their education. This, in turn, allows these children to view education as an asset to them. Second, engaged parents connect with

their children's school staff and other parents by becoming involved in committees or volunteering at school. Last, involved parents have built relationships with their children's schools, allowing them to receive constant updates on their child's academic growth. The relationships formed give these parents advantages because they can intervene early and provide or request necessary support for their child.

Studies dedicated to parent involvement have found that the more involved the parents are, the more children observe that participation and become more interested in education and successful at school (Gross et al., 2020; Hillier, 2021; Ryan et al., 2010). Cheong (2019) found that parental presence strengthens children's learning by helping them develop learning skills and motivation. The more parents are present, the more motivated children become (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012). Parents who are involved provide encouragement and motivation to their children; hence, their children tend to do better (Hornby, 2011). Epstein (2018) believed parental support starts at an early age, and parents are responsible for monitoring and managing their children's schooling through their presence in the educational process. Reece et al. (2013) stated that when parents demonstrate interest in their child's education, they create lasting effects, especially because dropout rates are noticeably decreased.

It is essential to recognize the efforts of parents when they are involved in their child's education in any way that is possible for them (Poza et al., 2014). Parents can be supportive and involved in their child's education in various ways. They can volunteer at school, attend parent-teacher meetings, and support homework completion (McDowall & Schaughency, 2017; Ogg et al., 2021). For families to be actively involved, school activities must assist parents in supporting their children (Lindberg, 2014; Poza et al.,

2014). In a study conducted by Kelty and Wakabayashi (2020), parents felt more willing to be involved when the activities created by the schools would provide them with ways to support their children academically. They felt these activities had meaningful outcomes for their children.

Parent involvement continues to be an effort that involves planning activities to support student's academic and personal growth (Lindberg, 2014). The literature demonstrates that when parents are involved and work with the school, there is evidence of positive changes in students' academic and social well-being. Fitriani and Istaryatiningtias (2020) found that when parents are involved at the school site, academic success is evident. For this to happen, schools must provide environments and opportunities for parents to contribute to the school's decisions. Sanders (2008) stated, "Effective partnerships require that schools view parents and communities as partners in the educational process and create environments in which collaboration for students' success is encouraged and supported" (p. 287).

Cheong (2019) stated that as parents become more involved in their child's education, they instill skills that support their learning throughout their school journey. Research has shown that when parents are not involved, students are less successful, and their achievement gap is widened (Ferguson, 2005; Nokali & Bachman, 2010). Therefore, it is crucial that parents are involved and that schools provide them with those opportunities (Cox, 2005; Rogers et al., 2000). Once schools continue to emphasize the importance of closing the necessary barriers that impede parent involvement, the schools find productive ways to work with families (Crew, 2007; Nokali & Bachman, 2010). Engaging in parent-friendly practices, communicating with parents about available

resources, and providing them with opportunities to be involved will increase parent involvement at home and school (Patte, 2002).

Barriers Impeding Parent Participation at the School Site

Many schools suffer from low parent participation because of various barriers (Crew, 2007; Lynch, 2021; Sagor, 2005). Educational background, culture, race, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status, parenting, home life, time, level of education, and immigrant status can all impact the way parents participate and are involved in schools (Baker et al., 2016; Massucco, 2020; Vellymalay, 2012). According to Buddy (2012), “Parents with low levels of education might not participate in school activities due to lack of knowledge of the curriculum, school environment, or familiarity with programs, events, or fundraisers hosted by the schools” (p. 29).

Parents who demonstrate a low level of involvement often come from homes with low levels of education, and many may also be dropouts (Massucco, 2020). Low-income and limited-English proficient parents often face more barriers to being able to participate in schools. They lack access to social capital, and many do not understand the school system (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013).

Educational Background, Culture, Race, Language, Socioeconomic, Parenting, and

Home/Work Life

A qualitative study by Broome (2018) sought to understand how parents and teachers perceive the influence of socioeconomic status on parental involvement. Some parents stated that their participation was “modeled by their parents when they were in school” (Broome, 2018, p. 119). There were mixed responses regarding whether the participants felt socioeconomic status influenced parent involvement. Job demands and

hours did impact their ability to be involved. They stated that to live in better conditions, they could not miss work to attend school activities.

Jeynes (2018) also found that parents' attitudes toward schools and one-parent households were additional barriers that impacted parent involvement. Hornby (2011) also found that when parents did not feel they could help their children, they became disengaged from school participation.

Conflicting Work Schedules

Working parents confirmed that barriers included conflicting work schedules, child care, transportation, and other responsibilities (Baker et al., 2016; Ryan et al., 2020). Additional studies focused on asking parents what hinders them from participating in school events (Hernandez, 2010; Lynch, 2021). Many families often could not attend school events because they could not get time off from work (Lynch, 2021).

In interviews conducted by Poza et al. (2014) regarding obstacles that impede parent participation, parents expressed

“regret at not being able to attend meetings or conferences because of conflicts with work schedules or the challenges of finding childcare during the designated time. One husband and wife pair, for instance, noted that despite a satisfactory level of information and resources, their schedules made it difficult to capitalize on all the opportunities. (p. 143).

Child Care and Transportation

Parents shared many barriers that impede them from being active at their child's school; child care and transportation were also included in the list of the causes for parents not to attend school events (Georgis et al., 2014). Providing multiple

opportunities and times for parents to participate can increase parents' attendance; scheduling events on the weekends and providing child care have been reported to reduce those barriers for families (Baker et al., 2016; MacPhee, 2021; Newman et al., 2019; Robinson & Harris, 2015).

Language Barriers

Language barriers are one of the most significant obstacle that impede active parent participation. Families often feel unwelcome at school, or the lack of ability to communicate in a common language negatively impacts their ability to communicate with school personnel (Hernandez, 2010; Lawson, 2018; Massucco, 2020). Immigrant parents who do not have language proficiency in English need to have experiences at school that allow them to communicate successfully and be active at school. According to MacPhee (2021), "Many times, they experience greater language disparity, making communication with the school challenging" (p. 35).

Language barriers are believed to be the cause for many families not to attend school events. Many times, schools forget to cater to the families that do not speak English and that impacts the outcome of parent involvement (Anicama et al., 2018; Wong, 2015). Asian immigrants are less likely to volunteer at school sites because of language barriers. Similarly, MacPhee (2021) also stated that a crucial barrier identified by immigrant parents was that they often have language conflicts that influence their feelings about schools.

Hindering Factors

As schools continue to see parent involvement in a traditional form, schools should be culturally aware of their population and begin to make changes with cultural

consciousness (Lynch, 2021; Patte, 2002). Acknowledging those differences must be recognized with the diversity at the school sites (Baker et al., 2016; Hernandez, 2010; MacPhee, 2021). How leaders at school sites develop parent activities must be tailored to the school community (Hornby, 2011; Massucco, 2020). Not only can this increase the involvement of parents, but it also creates a better relationship between the school and families (Galindo & Sheldon, 2012; Gan & Bilige, 2021; Lynch, 2021).

Parents need opportunities to participate in workshops that allow them to feel as if they are part of the school. At times, aligning the workshops with the needs of the parents becomes difficult for the schools as they continue to be more understanding of their school community (Buddy, 2012; Nokali & Bachman, 2010). When schools provide workshops that are helpful to parents, administrators see an increase in parent involvement (Powers, 2016). Gan and Bilige (2021) found that when schools provide opportunities for parents to feel valid and present, children want to do their best to please their parents.

Principals and schools can support parenting by knowing the families and communities. Often the principals and teachers do not have similar backgrounds to those of their students; therefore, the principal must ensure the students' cultures are respected (Hernandez, 2010). Principals can offer professional learning on cultural responsiveness for school staff. Staff must know how to work with diverse families, provide culturally responsive support, and have social-emotional skills (Jacques & Villegas, 2018).

The Impact of Ethnicity and Immigration

Cultural differences, the lack of knowledge of the American school systems, and socioeconomic factors have also contributed to barriers for families (Cheung &

Pomerantz, 2012; Peña, 2002). Cultural differences may impact the way these families decide to engage with schools. Some immigrant families come from a culture in which parents are not expected to be engaged in their children's education, but trust that schools are doing the right thing for their children (Jacques & Villegas, 2018).

Latino immigrant parents have often preferred helping their children at home rather than attending in-person meetings and events (Baker et al., 2016). According to Poza et al., "A more critical perspective recognizes and values the means by which Latino immigrant families participate in children's education while acknowledging the obstacles they face in connecting with school and other such institutions in their recipient communities" (p. 124). Turney and Kao (2009) found that immigrant parents, compared to native-born parents, reported more barriers to participating in school and being involved. Immigrant parents face multiple barriers because of their limited English proficiency (Anicama et al., 2018; Turney & Kao, 2009). Latino and Asian immigrant parents are more comfortable working with their children at home rather than at the school site (Anicama et al., 2018; Ryan et al., 2010).

Asian families are engaged in helping their children in educational practices at home according to M. Lim (2012). They tend to be less involved in volunteering or being actively involved in the decision-making process in their children's schools. M. Lim's study in 2012 examined how Korean families at a school site perceived and responded to institutional inequalities in a family-school partnership. These families felt that the opportunities for parent engagement were not conducive to their needs and should be based on a more traditional approach. They created an educational safety net and conducted regular meetings to support their children. They were able to help the school

recognize the ineffective approaches to parental involvement and helped build an effective family-school partnership for the diverse families within the school. Schools need to be aware of cultural differences among diverse families and build culturally relevant home-school partnerships. According to Lim (2012), “Families from cultures in which parental participation has not been emphasized as much as in the United States may be overwhelmed by teachers’ demands for them to partner with the school” (p. 105).

Muzvidziwa (2017) found that schools must provide the support families need. Providing a culture-sensitive environment that is compassionate to the needs of parents and providing parents with the opportunities to be involved cultivates an environment that promotes student learning. Often, the events hosted by schools need more framework to meet the needs of the families (Gross et al., 2020; Wilder, 2014). Schools must find ways to engage families by offering relevant information to enhance their skills to help their children (Nokali & Bachman, 2010).

School Responsibility

Historically, describing parent involvement has been quite broad, making it difficult for schools to implement, design, and evaluate parent initiatives that engage parents (Gross et al., 2020). Schools often find many barriers that impact parent participation within their schools. Galindo and Sheldon (2012) have found that schools should familiarize themselves with the community to resolve the barriers that impede families from involvement. School administrators should encourage their staff to acquaint themselves with their students and families. Knowing the families in the community and identifying their needs can help schools better plan when scheduling events.

Students' academic success is the responsibility of both the schools and families (Hornby, 2011). Families still expect the schools to lead in providing learning opportunities for families. Wilder (2014), Domina (2005), and Park and Holloway (2017) all agreed that there is a need for parents to participate in school activities, including committees that have a voice in school policy, budget, and safety. Parents should be present to promote the importance of education in their children's school. Parents involved are more likely to be aware of their children's academic progress (Hillier, 2021; Hornby, 2011; McDowall & Schaughency, 2017).

Communication

Through parent involvement research, it has been noted that often parents have requested better school communication (Lynch, 2021). Parents ask that the schools provide them with the planned event dates in advance to enable the families to participate. Communicating with neighboring schools to avoid conflicting events can be a way to reduce barriers to time and schedules. Schools should consider these barriers when scheduling meetings and events. Sharing school calendars with other schools within their communities can prevent events from occurring on the same day and time (Hornby, 2011; Lawson, 2018; MacPhee, 2021; Ogg et al., 2021).

Oftentimes parents feel that the only communication they received from their child's schools was to inform them of an adverse event and sometimes regarding grades (Baker et al., 2016). Parents feel that communication with the school was limited and relevant information needed to be communicated with families. Improving the communication between parents and schools can help increase parent involvement (Baker et al., 2016; Lynch, 2021). Schools with many minority students must be able to assist

with these families' needs (MacPhee, 2021). These families may face barriers like juggling schedules, sports, family commitments, and other responsibilities.

Positive School Culture

Creating a positive culture at the school site can also increase parent involvement (Muzvidziwa, 2017). A positive environment is an effective way of communicating and building relationships with parents. Both work toward a common goal and a shared responsibility for student academic success (Robinson & Harris, 2015). Parents tend to be more open to involvement when they are welcomed and made to feel they are an essential part of their child's success (Hernandez, 2010; Massucco, 2020; Okeke, 2014). When schools fail to welcome the parents, they often feel as though they are not important enough and unmotivated to be involved (Hornby, 2011).

Immigrant parents are more engaged in their child's education when schools' welcome parents into their school sites. Wong (2015) found that immigrant parents from South Asia have a desire to be engaged in their child's school when teachers in the United States demonstrated a friendlier demeanor to them than what they were used to in their homeland. Kelty and Wakabayashi (2020) also found that when schools welcome all, this lessens the feeling of the unknown for immigrant parents, making it easier for these families to be engaged.

Government Educational Programs

Research has shown that student success correlates with parental involvement at school sites over an extended period. Teachers, staff, and parents have already noticed the correlation between parent involvement and student success, and policymakers have recognized it (Wilder, 2014). Policy-makers must create new initiatives and reforms to

support and implement school requirements involving parents (Domina, 2005). To further support parent engagement efforts, three new initiatives began in 1965 with Federal Requirement under Title I, followed by ESSA in 2002 and NCLB Act in 2015.

Federal Requirements Under Title I

Title I is a federally funded program initially authorized under the ESEA of 1965 and has been periodically reauthorized since then (CDE, 2023). A high focus is placed on Title I schools to ensure all families can access their child's education. It aims to improve basic programs operated by school districts and county offices that consult with teachers, principals, pupil services personnel, administrators, other staff, and parents. The two most recent reauthorizations of ESEA have included specific requirements regarding parents being part of their child's education.

The Title I federal funds help to meet the educational needs of students in California schools (CDE, 2023). Funds support effective, evidence-based educational strategies that close the achievement gap and enable students to meet the state's challenging academic standards. Title I funded schools are either targeted assistance schools or schoolwide program schools.

NCLB Act

On January 8, 2002, the NCLB Act was passed by Congress (CDE, 2023). This reauthorization of ESEA created a legal requirement and enforceable provisions ensuring that parent involvement was present at schools. One emphasis in the NCLB was for schools to create plans to increase parental involvement. It made specific provisions involving parental involvement. This policy was created to support struggling students by encouraging their parent's involvement at the school. It also attempted to bridge the gap

for academically challenged students by providing high-quality teaching standards (Standerfer, 2006). The NCLB policy helped schools to increase parent involvement because it held schools accountable while providing options for parents (CDE, 2023).

NCLB provided specifics on increasing parental involvement and ensuring families participate in their child's education. Manaday (2014) stated, "Under NCLB, parental involvement was not only fostered but expected by schools since it enables parents to help with their children's homework, study habits, and attendance issues" (p. 7). The NCLB Act came to an end in 2015. However, a new act was implemented, which continued the emphasis on parental involvement.

ESSA

In December 2015, President Obama signed ESSA. This act replaced NCLB as the latest reauthorization of ESEA (CDE, 2023). Under this law, schools need to develop a parent and family engagement policy. All schools receiving Title I funds were required to follow the guidelines and requirements for parent involvement. To receive funds, the school needed to demonstrate that they were creating and maintaining parent involvement opportunities. Schools became responsible for demonstrating how the parents at their school were assigned to participate in the school's decision-making process.

ESSA requires states and schools to be transparent with parents and provide them with accessible important information on test performances in reading, math, and science. Being transparent with families makes them well-informed (CDE, 2023). By schools providing the information and being transparent, parents can make the best decisions for their children. Parents can access information allowing them to determine whether to continue at a low-performing school or move their child to another school.

Under the ESSA, LEA, local control accountability plan, and LCFF are responsible for outreach to all parents and family members (CDE, 2023). They must create programs, activities, and procedures for the involvement of parents and families. These activities need to be planned and implemented with meaningful consultation with parents of participating children. The meetings are required to be conducted annually and be flexible to meet the needs of the parents. School districts that receive Title I funds must reserve at 1% of their allocation for parent and family engagement activities. This money is intended to support workshops, meetings, communication initiatives, and programs that assist with increasing the participation of parents in schools.

Theoretical Foundations on Child Development

Parent involvement is not new. It is something that has been explored for years (Powers, 2016). At the start of the 20th century, throughout the United States, parents showed interest in being involved in their child's education (Tekin, 2011). L. Lim and Renshaw (2001) stated that cultures influence who people are, and those around them have influences. People learn from their surroundings and make changes as time changes. Some of the theoretical foundations researched to support parent involvement have been the theories by Vygotsky (1962), Bandura (1977), Piaget (1981), and Mowder (1997, 2005, 2006). Their theories support the value of parental involvement in fostering the development of children.

Sociocultural Development Theory

The sociocultural theory, developed by Vygotsky, (1962) indicates that social interactions help children develop. The interactions children have with their parents can contribute to the learning process of children (Nardo, 2021). A concept discussed in

reviewing sociocultural theory is the concept of internalization, which allows children to learn from others. Yaghoubi and Farrokh (2022) stated that the interactions one has with others and what one internalizes through those interactions can be used later in life.

The sociocultural theory implies that most of the learning done by humans is through social processes, developing relationships, and learning from their cultural experiences (Yaghoubi & Farrokh, 2022). The relationships built with others allow individuals to use later what is learned in their performance on tasks. The relationships built allow individuals to function within society (Fernández et al., 2015).

People constantly change depending on what is going on in their lives (L. Lim & Renshaw, 2001). Therefore, they L. Lim and Renshaw (2001) stated that sociocultural theory consists of interactions children have with their parents, and the scaffolding they can provide to open the child's cognitive abilities. Through scaffolding, a parent is able to demonstrate and guide the learning of the child. Furthermore, the changing nature of relationships and activities that individuals are part of continues to impact learning development. L. Lim and Renshaw (2001) stated, "Recent changes and reform in research paradigms have engaged sociocultural perspectives and processes for creating new opportunities for valuing cultural diversity and creating possibilities for culturally inclusive partnerships and communities" (p. 15).

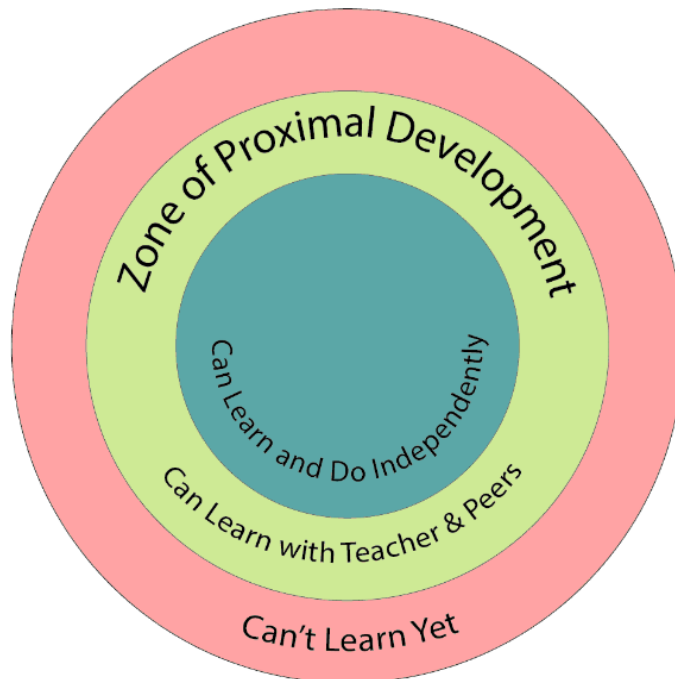
ZPD

Vygotsky's ZPD also demonstrates that people constantly learn from others. ZPD is studied and used in schools (Miller, 2011; Nardo, 2021). Fernández et al. (2015) stated that children learn when working collaboratively with others who may not be in the same stages. Children in this zone learn independently and collaborate (Vygotsky, 1962). Many

educators can testify that Vygotsky's (1962) theory works. They have observed that children learn more quickly and effectively from working with others rather than from learning independently (Powell & Kalina, 2009). See Figure 1 for the model of ZPD.

Figure 1

Model of ZPD



Note. From "Encourage Your Students to Step Into the Zone," by University of Alaska Fairbanks CTL Staff, February 20, 2017, University of Alaska Fairbanks, p. 1 (<https://iteachu.uaf.edu/2017/02/20/encourage-your-students-to-step-into-the-zone/>).

Vygotsky's (1962) theory of proximal development focuses on how the child grows. Similarly, Woolfolk (2004) found Vygotsky's belief that learning is done through social interactions and often through the cultural setting. Children's interactions with their parents can contribute to how they learn. Children learn better when someone helps them initially and supports them in increasing their skills (Vygotsky, 1962). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and theory of the ZPD both support the idea that parental

involvement from the start of a child's education can increase students' academic achievement.

Modeling Theory

Another theorist who is notable in the field of educational psychology is Bandura (1977) and his modeling theory. In this theory, Bandura stressed that social learning is done through observations of others (Eun, 2019). Parents are the ones children learn from at the beginning of their lives, and the modeling theory states that learning from others has a significant impact on the learning process (Cherry, 2022). In his theory, Bandura pointed out that imitation is of central importance when it comes to others learning from observation (Grusec, 1992).

Learning is complex because it is an ongoing process. Bandura suggested learning is done through observation and modeling (Cherry, 2022) and that human behavior, such as language, may only be possible to learn with modeling (Cherry, 2022; Grusec, 1992). Children learn from watching and hearing members of their environment. The modeling of individuals such as parents and members of the community enhances the learning of others (Grusec, 1992).

Piaget (1981) is often connected with cognitive development. The cognitive development theory discusses families' role in children's development (Tekin, 2011). Piaget's theory states that children learn through interactions with others and create their knowledge from what they learn from others (Wadsworth, 2004).

Children use their experiences with others to help them develop structures within their environments (Hakvoort, 2002). Piaget (1981) believed that a child's way of thinking changes as they grow. He believed children's cognitive development changes

through stages (Miller, 2011). Parent involvement throughout their learning can help a child learn and develop academically.

Parent Development Theory

The parent development theory is a theoretical framework started in the 1990s by Mowder (1997). It was previously known as the parent role development theory, later renamed to parent development theory (PDT). This theory focuses on the social roles and interactions of the parent with the child throughout their life (Mowder, 2005). PDT also provides an understanding of individuals' parenting perceptions and behaviors. This theory can assist professionals in working with families. This theory aligns with social learning and cognitive developmental theories. Mowder and Sanders (2008) described

the commonalities, or parent role characteristics, typically include indications of bonding (caring, demonstrating affection, loving), discipline (providing, discussing and following through with rules), education (educating, guiding, teaching), general welfare and protection (providing for and protecting), responsivity (interacting with and responding to), and sensitivity (understanding and matching responses to children's needs). (p. 676)

Parents' behaviors change as necessary from when a child is an infant until later in life. Parents modify their parenting skills to meet the needs of their children (Mowder, 2005; Sperling, 2003). Proactive parenting and involvement have helped to reduce behaviors at schools. Parent involvement is a characteristic of the theory, which refers to one of the roles of the parent being general welfare and protection (Hill et al., 2004; Mass & Nijnatten, 2005; Mowder, 2006). This theory helps schools understand the needs of their community and work with parents. Professionals who work with children and their

parents need to understand the parents they work with and appreciate what parents have to offer (Mowder, 2005). Mowder (1997) through her research shared that children learn the parent's role in their life at an early age. She stated that children observe their parents and the behaviors they demonstrate in front of them (Mowder, 2005).

Theoretical Framework

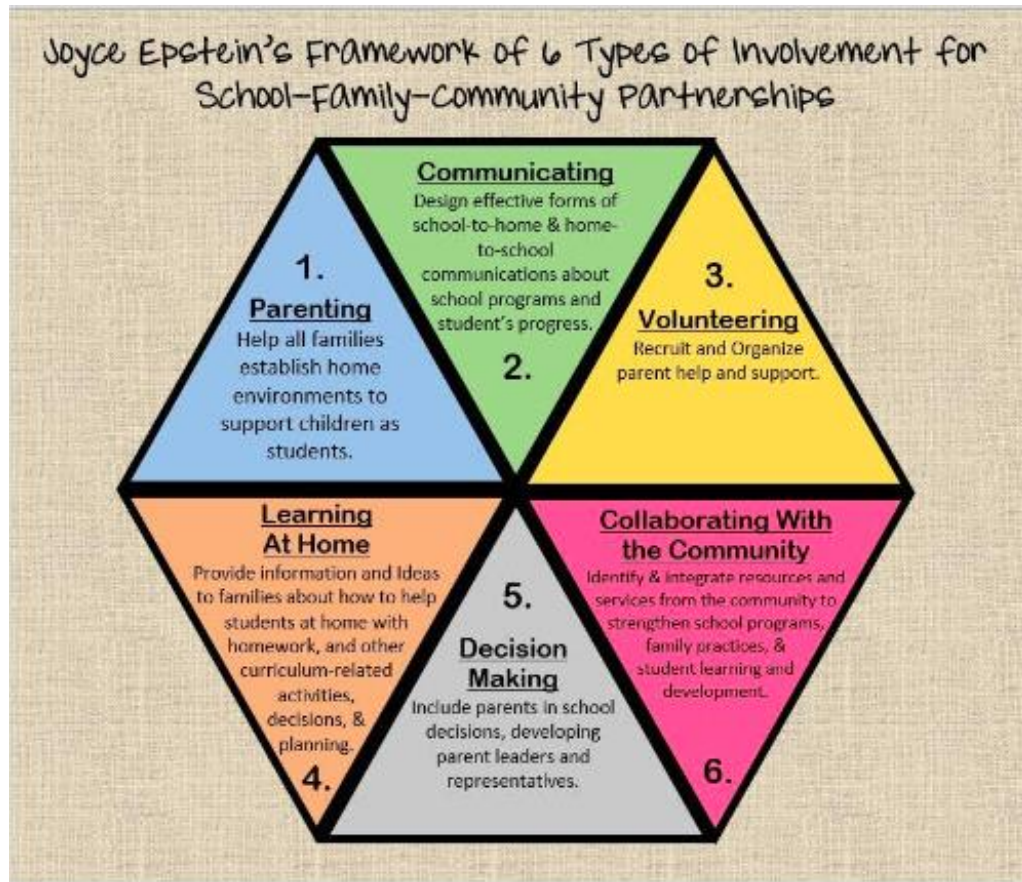
Epstein is known for her work on identifying ways to increase the partnership between schools, parents, and communities. In 1981, she began her research at the elementary school level. The work of Epstein is used by many educational partners including district leaders, schools, and policymakers (Epstein, 2011). In 1995, Epstein established the National Network for Partnership Schools to continue her research (Epstein et al., 2009). Epstein indicated that parental involvement is needed in children's educational process. The framework of six types of involvement was developed to support schools in creating a systematic approach to create partnerships between parents and schools (Epstein & Sheldon, 2019).

Epstein's Parent Involvement Model - Six Types of Parent Involvement

Epstein's framework focuses on the importance of families becoming involved and active participants in the school community. Parent involvement and collaboration with the school allow the schools to work together (Epstein, 2011). Through her work, Epstein developed a framework comprising six types of parent involvement: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community (Epstein, 2011; Sheldon & Epstein, 2007). See Figure 2 for an illustration of the six types of parental involvement.

Figure 2

Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement for School-Family-Community Partnerships



Note. From “Framework of the Six Types of Parent Involvement,” by M. Keany, 2019, *School Leadership 2.0.*, p. 1 (<https://schoolleadership20.com/m/discussion?id=1990010%3ATopic%3A333993>).

These six types of parent involvement have assisted schools in creating their guide at the school sites (Bower & Griffin, 2011). The six types of involvement created by Epstein et al. (2009) are

- Parenting: Helping and assisting families with parenting and child-rearing skills, understanding child and adolescent development, and setting home conditions that support children as students at each age and grade level.

- Communicating: Communicating with families about school programs and student progress through effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications.
- Volunteering: Improving recruitment, training, work, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and audiences at the school or in other locations to support students and school programs.
- Learning at home: Involving families with their children’s learning activities at home, including homework and other curriculum-linked activities and decisions.
- Decision making: Including families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through [parent teacher associations/parent teacher organizations (PTA/PTO)], school councils, committees, and other parent organizations.
- Collaborating with the community: Coordinating resources and services for families, students, and the school with businesses, agencies, in other groups, and providing services to the community. (p. 23)

Epstein’s (2011) framework has supported parent engagement by various educational organizations. Sanders (2008) stated, “When schools integrate into their educational programs activities that include these six types of involvement, they also create opportunities for meaningful interaction among individuals in students’ schools, families, and communities” (p. 288). Epstein (2001) stated that each type of involvement allows schools and families to work together.

A parent's first involvement with a child is parenting. Schools can support parents in this area by providing workshops that empower parents to help their children at home (Buddy, 2012). Reece et al. (2013) conducted a study in which they sought to look for barriers in urban schools impeding parents to be involved in their children's education. Using the Neighboring Project Parent Empowerment and Volunteer Readiness Program, a program that in collaboration with various programs puts in efforts to increase the engagement of parents in schools, they provided resources for parents to learn how to be involved in their child's education. Their goal was to provide families with knowledge, skills, and the confidence to be more involved in their child's school.

The second involvement is communicating. Schools must develop effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications about the events at school and the academic progress of students (Patte, 2002). In their study, Stefanski et al. (2016) found that parents want open communication from schools to inform them about everything happening at the school site. Keeping parents informed allows parents to be more involved and not be surprised by activities or their child's academic progress. They also found that parents feel they are part of the school when transparent communication is present. If there is no effective form of communication, many opportunities to engage parents are missed (Lynch, 2021).

Volunteering is the third type of involvement. Parents can become involved in their child's school by volunteering in various activities (Lindberg, 2014). Parents can support in the classrooms and also be members on school committees. Volunteering allows parents to be engaged in activities that support student learning (Patte, 2002). As parents help in the classrooms, they contribute to the learning of children in the

classroom, making them instrumental in classrooms (Thaman, 1998). Anicama et al. (2018) found that if schools provide all parents with opportunities to be involved, it can allow more parents to become members of the school without having barriers impede them. They stated that parents can be open to working in classrooms by “inviting parents to share a heritage cultural tradition at school, or classroom volunteer work that does not require English proficiency” (p. 581). School administrators must find ways to provide volunteering opportunities for parents throughout the students’ schooling. Many times there are plenty of opportunities in elementary schools, which begin to diminish in the older school years (Newman et al., 2019).

The fourth involvement is learning at home. Epstein (2007) emphasized a form of involvement of parents at home in how they support and help their children learn. This can be done through support with homework or other activities (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013).

Sanders (2008) stated that schools must provide families with strategies to help their children away from school. Paulynice (2020) stated that parents who create environments conducive to learning promote the importance of school and education. Epstein et al. (2009) discussed the idea that teachers should design homework that allows parents to help their children, including reading together or other fun activities.

The fifth involvement is including families in decision making. Dixon (2008) stated that parents become involved when they feel valued and accepted. As schools create a positive environment that is welcoming to parents and invite them to be active participants in decision-making committees, they feel accepted. When parents feel they have a voice in their child’s school decision making, they become active partners with the administrators and all educational partners (Paulynice, 2020). Epstein (2011) emphasized

that when parents are involved in the decision-making process, they also begin to meet the other parents at the school. They maintain these relationships by being part of committees at the school site (Street, 2009).

Collaborating with the community is Epstein's (2011) sixth form of involvement. Epstein stated that creating partnerships with community members or organizations can create opportunities for students. Through these partnerships, students with fewer resources can often receive needed resources (Broome, 2018). Working together with neighboring businesses, health services, churches, and government agencies can create partnerships with schools and families (Buddy, 2012; Lynch, 2021; Sanders, 2008). Opportunities for students to participate in service projects also allow these partnerships to be formed (Epstein et al., 2009). Community involvement allows students to be aware of jobs and provides parents with information on resources they may need to learn (Street, 2009).

Elementary Principals

According to the CDE (2023), the responsibilities of school principals are the following:

Principals and superintendents are responsible for the “big picture” of their schools and districts. This might include anything from budget management to staff training and working directly with students and parents. It is critical work that is full of opportunities to help students and families in California succeed.

(p. 1)

For decades, there has been research conducted on the position of a school principal, an attempt to define the position, and knowing how the role of a principal

impacts all aspects of education (C. Brown & Militello, 2016). Studies show that principals can impact student success by having a clear vision and goals for the school (Brooks, 2007). In a study conducted by C. Brown and Militello (2016), principals stated that to do what is best for children, it is essential that all resources available to them are being used and include all educational partners.

Broome (2018) described one critical role of elementary principals: creating ways to engage families. Jeynes (2018) and Broome found that school principals are pivotal in ensuring parents play an active role in their children's education. Broome discussed that principals must build diverse opportunities for families to be involved, such as family nights and workshops to help empower parents. School principals need to believe in the importance of ensuring they make parents educational partners who participate in improving their children's education (Bryk et al., 2010).

The Role of the Principal in Elementary Schools

There are many responsibilities of a school principal. Principals are responsible for supporting teachers, student academic growth, and creating partnerships with parents to make them active participants in their child's life (Ishimaru, 2014). Schools have to prioritize family engagement because federal policies have enforced the participation of parents in schools (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Mapp and Kuttner (2013) stated that principals consistently try to find ways to engage parents. However, it continues to be a challenging part of their role. Principals want to be able to work with parents but have found that the differences in cultures and backgrounds can make it difficult to create those opportunities (Lawson, 2018; Lynch, 2021; MacPhee, 2021; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013).

If school staff do not know their families, it can be difficult for a connection to be made (Gross et al., 2020). Hernandez also noted in 2010 that there are times when schools do not realize that minority parents can feel left out when all communication from the school is done in English. Finding ways to engage families and checking to ensure the activities created meet families' needs will allow principals to evaluate the success of the activities (Broome, 2018; McDowall & Schaughency, 2017). Ensuring they are gathering information from other education leaders can support principals in creating positive parental participation opportunities.

Often the principals and teachers do not have similar backgrounds as their students; therefore, the principal must ensure the students' cultures are respected (Hernandez, 2010). Principals can offer professional learning on cultural responsiveness for school staff. Staff must know how to work with diverse families, provide culturally responsive support, and have social-emotional skills (Jacques & Villegas, 2018).

Principals experience success in parent engagement when they encourage parents to be leaders in certain activities according to G. Brown (2015). In these opportunities, parents can use their expertise and help others become involved. These principals also promoted after-school activities and weekend events and used their specialists to conduct monthly workshops for parents. One principal stated, "Overall, we get a wonderful turnout for our events, but we keep it within the school plan, so everyone knows how these things fit into the overall education of their child" (G. Brown, 2015, p. 108).

Principals are also responsible for meeting specific standards that guide them in being influential leaders. In the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), which is the second largest school district in the United States, principals are responsible for

following the LAUSD school leadership framework (LAUSD, 2023). Figure 3 illustrates the framework used within the LAUSD district.

Figure 3

LAUSD School Leadership Framework



Note. From “Los Angeles New Administrators Leadership Program,” by Center of Collaborative Education, February 26, 2015, Los Angeles Unified School District, p. 13 (<https://slideplayer.com/slide/10275978/>).

Within this framework, there are six standards school principals are required to meet. Within those six standards, one standard is explicitly dedicated to family and community engagement—Standard 5, family and community engagement. This standard addresses how principals can ensure parents are involved at the school site. Two components guide principals on how to work with families and define what is expected of them. The first component is

Component 5A: Engages families and community members as partners has the following components:

1. Engages community and family members and involves them in leadership opportunities.
2. Provides opportunities for family and community education.
3. Establishes community partnerships that support students and schools
(LAUSD, 2023, p. 4b).

The second component is

Component 5 B: Communicates with families and community members has the following components:

1. Creates or maintains school-home-community communication structures.
2. Collects and analyzes data related to families and the community
(LAUSD, 2023, p. 4b).

Standard 5 aligns with Epstein's parent involvement model, which states that parents should be active school community members by creating partnerships and providing parents with leadership opportunities (Epstein, 2007, 2011). Communicating with families is also a responsibility of principals. Component 5 also aligns with Epstein because research has shown that open communication with families increases parents' school involvement.

Principals' Perspectives on Parent Involvement

Much research has been done on the impact of parent involvement on student academic achievement. However, involving parents can be difficult and create challenges for principals (Horvat et al., 2010). Sometimes these challenges impact the way parents become involved in schools. If the perceptions or barriers are seen as unfavorable, schools experience limited parent involvement throughout the school year (Epstein,

2010). It is crucial to recognize that the lack of communication and language barriers can prevent parents from attending. There is clear evidence that the actions principals take toward involving parents can either promote positive relationships or can hinder the involvement of parents (Epstein, 2007, 2011).

Principals' Strategies to Overcome Barriers Impacting Parent Involvement

When all educational partners work together from the beginning of a child's educational journey, it supports parent involvement (Powers, 2016). Baker et al. (2016) shared that schools should be able to reduce these barriers by learning about the needs of their families and communities. Epstein (2008, 2011, 2018) shared six types of parent involvement that can guide principals in developing school and family partnerships. Using Epstein's framework, barriers can be reduced because principals can use each type to develop various programs.

One program being used by various schools in California and throughout the country is the Parent Institute for Quality Education ([PIQE]; n.d.). According to PIQE (n.d.),

PIQE provides evidence-based programs to California families and schools.

Serving nearly 400 schools from 130 school districts and more than 20,000 families annually, we work with English learners, immigrants, refugees and low-income families. We help enable parents' capacity to engage in their children's education and strengthen parent-teacher-school collaboration. (p. 1)

Communicating with families can be key to decreasing barriers (Epstein, 2018). Principals can assign staff members to make personal phone calls to families, provide monthly newsletters, use various social media platforms, emails, provide in-person

meetings, and virtual meetings can allow families to be able to be involved (Massucco, 2020; PIQE, 2023). The PIQE (2023) framework stated that expanding communication modes, tools, and spaces that foster open, two-way communication is important to reduce barriers for families. Culturally and linguistically responsive communication is necessary to reach diverse communities. See Figure 4 for an illustration of the PIQE framework.

Figure 4

Family Engagement



Note. From “Family Engagement,” by PIQE, n.d., p. 1 (<https://www.piqe.org/about/>).

Providing opportunities for parents to volunteer can allow parents to show their skills, assist in classroom activities, and participate in schoolwide activities (Epstein, 2018). In their study, Newman et al. (2019) found that middle-class families seem to volunteer more than working-class parents. However, key ways to ensure parents feel comfortable volunteering in classrooms can be training the parents. Worthy et al. (1999)

shared a program developed at Palm Cove Elementary in Pembroke Pines, Florida. The school principal wanted to use parents as volunteers in the classroom; however, they noted that some parents felt they needed more skills to help children. The school created a program in which they paired a teacher and a parent volunteer, and they attended workshops on how to teach reading. The parent worked with the specific teacher for six weeks. The parent volunteers were invited to participate in the monthly team meetings, and they shared their reflections and experiences. This allowed the parent volunteers to feel part of an important program at the school. It was stated that these parents took pride in supporting students. Providing ongoing opportunities for parents to be leaders and be involved in learning opportunities is something schools should be doing throughout the school year (PIQE, 2023).

Principals have to find ways to ensure students are learning at school and that parents can support students learning at home (Epstein, 2011). Principals can do this by having the school offer parent workshops that empower parents on how to work with their children at home, provide classes for parents, and use their teachers and staff to train and provide minilessons for families on various topics that they can use at home (Massucco, 2020; Powers, 2016; Poza et al., 2014). In collaboration with educational partners, the CDE developed the family engagement framework (CDE, 2023). In the framework, one principle was ensuring that families know ways to support their child's learning at home. Principals can allow teachers to work directly with families. The parent centers are also key in making this possible for parents.

Another way of reducing barriers for families to be involved is including parents in the decision-making process in schools (Epstein, 2011). The family engagement

framework stated that principals should provide opportunities to train families to learn budgetary items and familiarize themselves with the policies and roles they can have in the decision-making process at school (CDE, 2023). Principals must recruit families to participate in advisory committees.

The PIQE (2023) framework has principles that can support school leaders in reducing the barriers that impact parent participation in being involved in committees. Principle one stated that enhancing family participation and including families as part of the solution for education equity is important. School leaders should “support authentic family engagement in local and state decision-making spaces” (PIQE, 2023, p. 7). Principals should advertise the committees and personally invite parents to participate in the various committees established at the school site.

Another key component that invites families into the schools is collaborating with the community (Epstein, 2011). In many schools, families lack resources, and the school can provide these resources to families (Epstein, 2018). Principals should build relationships with community partners to bring necessary resources to the schools. Building relationships can bring wraparound services and resources within the community (Georgis et al., 2014). Wraparound services can consist of mental and behavioral support for families. Making these connections builds and strengthens the relationships between parents and the school. Principals can hire personnel to be the liaison between the community resources and bring those resources into the school (Massucco, 2020). Principle 3 of the PIQE (2023) framework stated that principals and school staff should support the development of community schools and wraparound services. The family engagement framework (CDE, 2023) also supports the actions of

having schools “identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development” (p. 12).

Summary

Chapter II provided a review of the literature on parent involvement. At the beginning of Chapter II, the background of education was outlined. Next, the barriers and benefits of parent involvement were discussed. The various theoretical foundations that support the importance of family involvement in a child’s educational journey were shared. Throughout the research, it was found that the academic success of students can correlate with the involvement of parents. Epstein’s (2011) six types of parent involvement were used as a guide to gain successful parental involvement that leads to students’ academic success. Epstein’s framework is found throughout the research and provides expectations for schools to follow to build schools with active parent engagement, partnerships, and sustainability.

There is still further research needed for principals to reevaluate their current parental involvement programs that continue to fail to increase parents being present at the school site. It is necessary for schools to change their current ways of doing things to adapt to the changes in family structures and dynamics (Buddy, 2012). Actions should be taken by districts to ensure teachers and school staff are prepared to be effective in communicating with families to ensure positive relations are being created and that schools are promoting positive school cultures to ensure long-lasting and effective family involvement (Hornby, 2020).

The literature review also included various frameworks used to support principals in developing programs and activities that bring parental involvement into the schools. They provided explicit steps for implementing programs, Broome (2018) stated that when principals create parental involvement opportunities, they sometimes forget to consider their school population. To reduce barriers impeding active participation at schools and effectively plan events that parents can attend, principals need to know the population within their communities. Principals' roles and perspectives on parent involvement were discussed, exploring ways exemplary principals reduce barriers and implement strategies to increase parent involvement.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

This chapter focuses on the problem many school principals face with sustaining parent involvement at their sites and how they overcome them. The purpose of the study, research questions, research design, population, and a summary of the study are reviewed. The research method used in this study was phenomenological research. Phenomenological research is used to portray the participants' lived experiences (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2002). Research methods allow researchers to decide how to collect evidence and analyze the data they gather as evidence. During phenomenological research, the thoughts, feelings, and essence of what the participants describe are collected for the study (Patton, 2015).

Principals need help finding ways to sustain parent involvement at their schools. The barriers must be analyzed and overcome to create positive school experiences and partnerships for families (Epstein, 2018; PIQE, 2023). To strengthen students' academic success, all educational partners must work together to provide the support needed (Baker et al., 2016; Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; Powers, 2016). This research provides strategies exemplary principals have used in their school sites to sustain and promote ongoing and active parent involvement. This chapter describes the participants, the instruments used, data collection, and procedures. This chapter also provides the reader with the data analysis.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to identify the barriers exemplary elementary principals encountered as they sought to improve parent

engagement at their school sites. A secondary purpose of this study was to identify and describe the strategies they used to overcome the identified barriers to implement and maintain successful parent engagement at their school sites.

Research Question

What are the lived experiences of exemplary principals who have successful parent engagement at their school sites?

Research Subquestions

1. What barriers do exemplary elementary principals encounter as they seek to improve parent engagement at their school sites?
2. What strategies do exemplary elementary principals use to overcome the identified barriers to implement and maintain successful parent engagement at their school sites?

Research Design

This qualitative research study focused on barriers that impact parent engagement at the school sites. I explored how exemplary principals have overcome these barriers to implement and maintain successful parent engagement at their school sites.

Qualitative research focuses on how people make meaning of their experiences (Patton, 2015). It provides information and data to better understand the world. There are various forms to gather qualitative data; some include interviews, observations, and documentation. Data collected are analyzed to understand an individual's beliefs and motivations (Patten & Newhart, 2018; Patton, 2015).

The study in which concepts, experiences, and opinions can be used to determine why certain actions and systems are put into place can all be gathered through qualitative

research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Qualitative methods facilitate the study of issues in depth and detail (Patton, 2002). Qualitative research designs are meant to describe naturally occurring phenomena; this type of research uses words. In qualitative research, the researcher attempts to gain a depth of understanding of the topic of interest (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

The methodology for this study was phenomenology. According to Patton (2015), “Phenomenological study (as opposed to a phenomenological perspective) is one that focuses on descriptions of what people experience and how it is that they experience what they experience” (p. 117). A phenomenological approach provided me with the essence of the lived experiences of exemplary principals who have found ways to overcome barriers to support and increase parent engagement at their school site. Patton stated, “The essences are the core meaning and mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced” (p. 116). I found common themes within the experiences provided by a group of exemplary elementary school principals. Massucco (2020) emphasized that qualitative research explores and allows the researcher to understand the concepts of individuals and how these groups have a connection because of a common problem or personal experiences.

Method Rationale

I considered the best method procedure to use for this study. Various methods, such as quantitative, mixed methods, and qualitative, were considered (Patton, 2015). Because of the purpose of this study, I determined that a qualitative methodology approach would best fit the research. My goal for this research was to share the lived experiences and approaches exemplary principals have taken to overcome the barriers

that impede parent participation at school sites. Qualitative research allowed for the gathered views, experiences, and approaches (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

The phenomenological approach also allows the participants to share their experiences of the experience (Patten & Newhart, 2018; Patton, 2015). I sought to get a clear picture of the impact barriers have had at schools, and the phenomenological approach provided that for the study (Salkind & Frey, 2020). Phenomenology focuses on the principals' first-hand experiences, meaning, and perspectives rather than abstract experiences (Patton, 2015). For those reasons, phenomenology was the best approach for this study.

Population

The population for this research was elementary school principals in public schools in California. According to the CDE (2023), there were 5,872 elementary schools in California at the time of this study. This population of principals who met the research criteria were the study subjects (Salkind & Frey, 2020). A target population is “a group of individuals or events from which a sample is drawn and to which results can be generalized” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 489). Because every school in California is led by a principal, it can be estimated that the population for this study was 5,872 elementary school principals in California.

Sampling Frame

The sampling frame for this study was a group of exemplary elementary school principals who meet specific criteria. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) stated that a sampling frame consists of a group of individuals from whom data is collected and who have similar characteristics. For this study, the principals work for a certain area within

Los Angeles County. The sampling frame was narrowed to 89 principals leading elementary schools in the North Valley of Los Angeles County.

Sample for the Study

According to Salkind and Frey (2020), “A smaller group of data is often called a sample, which is a portion, or a subset, of a population” (p. 466). The sample population for this study included 10 exemplary elementary school principals working in a district in the North Valley of Los Angeles County. Purposeful sampling was used to ensure the participants included in the study shared the same phenomena. The strategy chosen was group characteristics sampling. This strategy has the researcher “select cases to create a specific information-rich group that can reveal and illuminate important group patterns” (Patton, 2015, p. 267). Participants met the following criteria:

1. The participants have been at their school sites for 3 years or more.
2. The participants are principals at elementary schools serving preschool through fifth-grade students.
3. The participants are employed at a K–12 school district in the North Valley of Los Angeles.
4. The participants were recommended as exemplary principals in school leadership by their school’s director, principal supervisor, or colleague.
5. Once recommended, participants self-identified as meeting at least 3 criteria on the rubric at the sustaining level.

These principals were nominated by directors, supervisors of principals, who were perceived as potential candidates for this study. Once recommended as exemplary by a

principal supervisor, they self-identified as meeting at least three criteria on the rubric at the sustaining level.

The nominees met the criteria. For the purpose of this study, the sample population was elementary school principals who have sustained parent involvement at their school site. These principals have increased their parent participation from minimal to averaging 10% or more of parent participation throughout their events. The participants were recommended for their growth with parent participation and for the workshops they have offered to families, communications, and family partnerships they have created at their school sites.

The director, supervisor of the principal, has knowledge, experience, and affiliation with the organization. I hoped to learn the qualities of exemplary principals who have overcome barriers to increasing parent engagement at their school sites.

Sample Selection Process

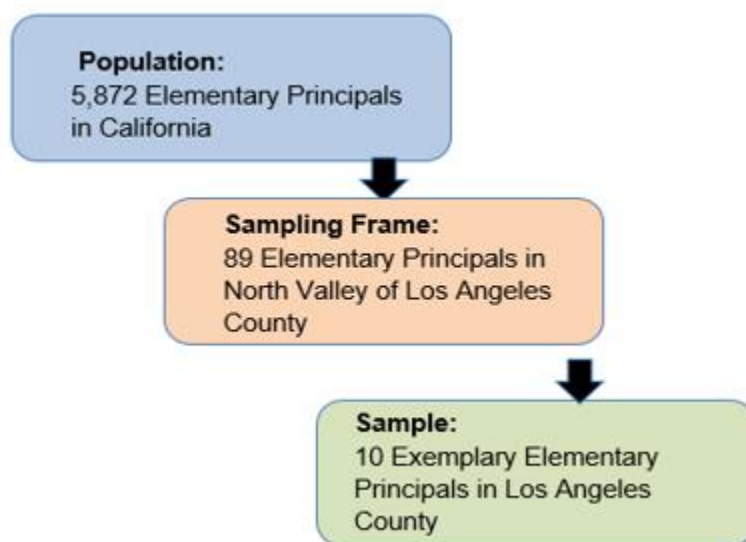
This study consisted of 10 exemplary elementary school principals in the North Valley of Los Angeles County. In qualitative research, the number of participants does not determine the quality of outcome, but rather the information received and the analysis of the information received provides the researcher with the best data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). A smaller sample becomes easier to interpret and receive more in depth and better understanding of the research. See Figure 5 for the sample selection process.

My dissertation chair and I decided that a sample size of 10 participants would provide enough data to analyze. I also identified some of the participants of interest after I reviewed their school websites and school's social media. I contacted the directors and

supervisors of principals and provided them with the names of potential participants. The directors reviewed the names provided, and then recommended qualified participants for this study. Each of the principals were contacted by email provided on their school's website. A sample of the contact-email is located in Appendix B.

Figure 5

Population, Sampling Frame, and Sample



Instrumentation

In a qualitative study, instruments typically consist of in-depth participant interviews, direct observations, and a review of artifacts (Patton, 2015). In this qualitative study, I was the primary instrument in qualitative data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The data collected consisted of structured, open-ended interviews, review of relevant observations and artifacts. I, along with the dissertation chair who has in depth experience in working with families and in Title I schools, developed an in-depth interview instrument that was based on an extensive review of literature in the area of

parent involvement and engagement at the school site. The interview questions developed are located in Appendix C.

I obtained data through one-on-one structured interviews with 10 participants who shared their lived experiences. I found common themes in the information provided to understand the experiences of these principals. In a phenomenological study, interviews of people who have experienced the phenomenon of interest are important because they share their own experiences (Patton, 2015). The location was at each individual's school site or was conducted as a virtual interview using technology, depending on the needs of the participants. Interviews were conducted based on the availability of each participant. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 min, depending on each participant's answers. I informed participants that the interviews would be recorded so I could capture all the details. To capture all information accurately, I used a digital recording device to record the interviews.

Researcher as Instrument of the Study

I shared similarities to the participants of this study. I was an elementary school principal who worked in a Title I school working on increasing parent involvement. My experiences and background impacted the decisions made while conducting this study. According to Patton (2015), "Qualitative inquiry provides a point of intersection between the personal and the professional" (p. 33). I refrained from using personal biases for the data to be credible and valid.

Validity

According to Salkind and Frey (2020), "Validity is, most simply, the property of an assessment tool that indicates that the tool does what it says it does. A valid test that

measures what is supposed to and works well for its intended purpose” (p. 116). I used the appropriate instrumentation for this study to collect data to address the purpose statement and research questions. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that researchers must ensure the accuracy of the results they have obtained while collecting data. All the interviews followed the same protocol. Questions were read in the same order, and all participants were asked the same questions to ensure each participant could answer the exact question and increase the consistency with each participant. This allowed me to analyze the responses and find common themes across the data. During the interviews, participants were able to share their experiences. The questions asked of participants were aligned to research questions to ensure relevant data were collected to support the validity of the study. The interview protocol was aligned to the research questions and purpose of the study. An alignment table was developed to ensure alignment with each question to the purpose of the study (see Appendix D). Patten and Newhart (2018) shared that validity refers to the measures used to obtain relevant information for the study.

Content Validity

To validate the study, a content expert was used to develop the interview questions. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) explained that a content expert is one who has experience related to the study. The content expert who generated the questions has (a) held an administrator position, (b) has worked in similar communities, and (c) holds a doctorate of education. The expert provided constructive feedback and helped develop the interview questions.

Reliability

Creswell (2014) stated that reliability in a study refers to results when using an instrument that are consistent and stable over time. When results are stable over time, this demonstrates that the tool used in the research is reliable (Patton, 2015). Throughout the interviews, the same interview questions were used. I shared the transcripts with the participants to ensure the credibility of the results of the interviews.

Internal Reliability

In an attempt to ensure the internal reliability of the data collected for this study, I used triangulation. Separate data collection methods were used to strengthen the reliability of the study. In using multiple sources, the researcher can solidify a theme or data (Patton, 2015). Triangulation was used to test for the consistency of the responses. I collected data from interviews, observations, and artifacts.

Field Testing

In this qualitative research, field testing was used because the interview questions (see Appendix C) were unique to the particular study. Field testing allowed me to determine whether the proposed instrument would work for the actual study (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). The interview questions were reviewed by the content expert and the dissertation chair. As feedback was provided, I refined the validity of the instrument being used. I performed a field test of the interview questions. Although the field-test interview participants were principals, they were not part of the study. The field test with the sample participant was performed with the supervision of an expert observer. The expert observer possesses a doctoral degree and experience with qualitative research. The observer did not participate in the interview but gave feedback to me regarding the

interview questions, pacing, delivery, body language, and neutrality of the interviewer along with other expert advice. The interview was recorded and transcribed on Zoom. At the end of the field test, the participant was also asked to give feedback about the interview to assess the clarity, length, and understanding of the interview questions (see Appendix E). After all interviews were conducted and analyzed, I discussed the results of the field test with the observer and made any necessary adjustments to the questions or sequence.

Data Collection

Data collection is an important component of any study. In a qualitative phenomenological study, the researcher aims to collect data about the experiences of the participants from their point of view (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). Before data collection could start, I obtained permission from the participants as well as the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB; see Appendix F). Data collected were securely stored and password-protected to maintain confidentiality.

The process of data collection includes many steps such as planning how to gather data, how observations would be conducted, and what types of artifacts would be gathered. I interviewed 10 exemplary elementary school principals working in the northern region of Los Angeles County. I conducted interviews, observations, and collected artifacts. The data collected were from exemplary elementary school principals who have overcome barriers to increasing parent participation at their school sites.

Types of Data

Three types of data were collected from exemplary elementary school principals who have overcome barriers impeding parent involvement. I used interviews, artifacts,

and observations. In collecting three different types of data, I was able to find themes, patterns, and trends within the data (Patton, 2015).

Interviews

During the interviews, six open-ended questions were used to allow the participants to provide responses that were detailed and provided their personal experiences (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Interviews allow the researcher to get a picture of the lived experiences of the participants (Patton, 2015). Each interview was conducted using a virtual platform. This allowed for more flexibility for both the researcher and the participant. Each interview was scheduled for 60 min. I requested verbal consent to record each interview. The confidentiality of each participant was respected by providing them with a different code to log on. Interviews conducted on the same day were spaced apart to avoid other participants logging on to the virtual platform at the same time. I informed each participant that their participation was confidential and safe.

Observations

Observations were part of the data collection process because they provided an opportunity for me to observe what the exemplary elementary principals were doing during interactions with families. There were three observations conducted. The observations occurred during Coffee With the Principal meetings, valet drop off, and workshops offered at the school site. To help me get a clearer picture of the principals' interactions with parents, these observations were necessary to see the similarities and differences between each of the principals. This helped with the credibility and reliability

of the study. During the interviews, I knew a little more about each participant as they had the opportunity to be on the field conducting observations (Patton, 2015).

Artifacts

Artifacts were collected as the third form of data. Artifacts provide tangible evidence of how each exemplary elementary school principal promotes and maintains parent participation at their school site. Documents such as newsletters, calendars, flyers, and website posts were used as artifacts for data analysis (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). These artifacts allowed for further triangulation because participant trends could be identified (Patton, 2015). The cross-referencing from the three types of data allowed me to find themes that strengthened the validity of this study.

Procedure for Collecting Data

Interview

To obtain interview data, the following steps were taken:

1. Ten exemplary elementary principals were identified for this study. They confirmed their participation in the study.
2. The 10 exemplary elementary principals were separately emailed with the information about the research.
3. A calendar was shared with interview times. The participants were able to select a time and day.
4. The interviews were held virtually.
5. On the day of the meeting, I reviewed the purpose of the meeting and shared the confidentiality information with them.

6. I reminded participants that their participation was voluntary and without compensation.
7. I provided the transcript to the participants to ensure the transcription was accurate to their responses.
8. I analyzed the transcripts for themes.
9. All transcripts of interviews were stored in a secure server and in a locked cabinet.

Observations

To obtain observational data, the following steps were taken:

1. I requested a calendar of events from participants.
2. I scheduled an observation.
3. I took observational notes.
4. I met with the participants after the observation.
5. To protect the confidentiality of the participants, no real names were used.
6. The documents of any observation were stored in a secure server and in a locked cabinet.

Artifacts

To obtain artifact data, the following steps were taken:

1. I requested flyers of the events.
2. I took a snapshot of their social media platforms.
3. I visited the parent and family center to collect any relevant forms in the area of parent participation.

Data Analysis

I used qualitative data analysis steps to analyze the data and find common themes and trends within the data collected. In the data analysis process, themes are key to the study because they describe the participants' lived experiences. During this process, I kept a frequency count on common responses (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The data reliability increases as the frequency count becomes higher. This allows the researcher to clearly conclude what the data show and not make assumptions (Patton, 2015).

Understanding the data collected can allow the researcher to better understand the participants' lived experiences. The data collected from the participants through the interviews was shared with participants. This was done to ensure the responses were accurate to the story they wanted to share. The data were coded to collect the trends and themes within the interviews. A frequency table was used to ensure the themes were organized and accounted for.

Once all the data and the frequency count were collected, I began to code the data. Coding allows for concrete data to support the study and can provide answers to the research questions. Coding allows the researcher to identify themes and the relationships between them. I used the NVivo, a digital coding program to provide the trends seen in the data.

Intercoder Reliability

Intercoder reliability was an important and necessary step in coding qualitative research data because it helped to determine validity. It also allowed for consistency within the research. Coding in qualitative data allows for steps in "validating a coding scheme, establishing a high level of reliability also has the practical benefit of allowing

the researcher to divide the coding work among many different coders” (Lombard et al., 2004, p. 3). I sought out other researchers to support in identifying all the steps were taken to code the data. This was necessary to ensure I coded data with consistency with other researchers who have coded similar data in the same area of research. This helped to eliminate any bias that may have obscured the data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). By ensuring that these steps are taken the researcher can determine that two or more individuals who look and hear the data can agree on the same results (Patton, 2015).

Limitations

As in many research studies, limitations for this study were not exempt. Some of the limitations in this study can be identified as potential researcher bias, the sample size, and the geographical area of participants. Biases from researchers can limit the accuracy of the data collected, which can then impact the data (Patten & Newhart, 2018).

Qualitative research, in which the study instrument is the researcher, can pose various limitations. One risk is that the researcher can potentially write questions a certain way to perhaps gear responses in such a way as to lead the responses of the participants. To reduce this limitation, the researcher can create the questions with a team and receive feedback from the team. Ensuring the questions seek specific answers relevant to the study and not written in the belief of the researcher can eliminate biases (Mehra, 2002). Also, the researcher may choose a group of participants sharing the same viewpoint, which may result in an invalid research project. Ensuring the questions are given to a larger sample size can reduce the potential of receiving invalid results.

The sample size was a limitation to the study as well. In a study, larger sample sizes can provide data that are not so limited (Patton, 2015). I found that for this study, a

small sample size was appropriate; however, it can still impede the generalizability of the results of the data.

The geographical area was also a limitation to the study because the sample was taken from a small community of a large district. The study was limited in that all areas within Los Angeles County are not the same, and the results may be difficult to generalize. This can limit the accuracy of the data (Patten & Newhart, 2018).

Summary

Chapter III described the methodology used for the phenomenological study of this research. It included the problem statement and research questions, it described the validity and reliability of the study, and it also focused on the methods used for data collection. All of this was used to gain important information on what exemplary elementary school principals have put into practice to overcome the barriers that impede parent involvement.

I shared the steps that were taken to ensure the validity and credibility of the data collected and how the data collected from participants were guarded for the protection and confidentiality of the participants. In the chapter, information on how the data were collected, analyzed, and coded was also included and covered in depth. Last, I was transparent in sharing the limitations of the study that may impact the results of the data.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

Overview

This qualitative research phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of exemplary elementary school principals who have overcome barriers that impede parent participation at their school sites. A qualitative phenomenological study was determined to be the best way to collect data from the participants for this study.

Chapter IV discusses the purpose, research questions, methodology, data collection procedures, research population, and sample participants of this research study. The data collected from the ten exemplary principals who have overcome barriers to maintaining parent involvement at their school sites are reviewed in this chapter. Additionally, the findings of the data collected are examined relative to the research questions. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the research study findings.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to identify the barriers exemplary elementary principals encountered as they sought to improve parent engagement at their school sites. A secondary purpose of this study was to identify and describe the strategies they used to overcome the identified barriers to implement and maintain successful parent engagement at their school sites.

Research Question

What are the lived experiences of exemplary principals who have successful parent engagement at their school sites?

Research Subquestions

1. What barriers do exemplary elementary principals encounter as they seek to improve parent engagement at their school sites?
2. What strategies do exemplary elementary principals use to overcome the identified barriers to implement and maintain successful parent engagement at their school sites?

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

This qualitative phenomenological study incorporated interviews from 10 exemplary principals from Los Angeles County. The primary data that were collected for this study were interviews that were recorded and transcribed, observations, and a review of artifacts. This study's interview protocols included 12 semistructured questions, which were reviewed by the dissertation chair and committee members. Participants who agreed to participate in the study received an invitation letter (see Appendix B) via email to explain the research study and their participation.

Interviews were scheduled by email using an appointment scheduling platform that allowed the participants to select a time and date that was convenient for both them and me. After scheduling and confirming a date and time for interviews, I emailed participants an informed consent form (see Appendix G), interview questions (see Appendix C), exemplary principal rubric (see Appendix H), and UMass Global Research Participant's Bill of Rights (see Appendix I).

Participants who needed clarification or further understanding of the study were allowed to ask questions pertaining to the research prior to their interview date. All of the university requirements and guidelines were followed to protect the confidentiality of the

participants. Prior to the data gathering, I ensured the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative certification (see Appendix J) and approval from the UMass Global IRB (see Appendix F) were received. I adhered to all university guidelines to ensure confidentiality of each participant.

While conducting the interviews, I followed the exact interview protocols for all 10 participants. All interviews were conducted via the Zoom web-based platform using a password-protected account. The participants were informed that the interviews would be recorded. The interviews varied in time and lasted between 42 and 56 min. After the interviews, I transcribed each interview with the assistance of NVivo transcription software. The transcripts were shared with the participants to receive feedback and to ensure the accuracy of the data. The data from the interviews were triangulated by the artifacts that were collected; according to Patton (2015), triangulation uses artifacts to support the validation of the analysis.

To support interview data, artifacts were gathered from the participant schools' websites and social media accounts. I also contacted the participants and requested artifacts to be sent via email. Participants shared flyers, invitations to events, and newsletters they use to communicate and invite families to events. There were seven observations conducted of various activities, which allowed the researcher to observe multiple activities. I visited a parent center, attended a workshop, and observed the interactions of principals and parents. I was able to document the observations by collecting observational notes.

Intercoder Reliability

This study established reliability from the development of an instrument and interview questions. The instrument and interview questions were reviewed by the dissertation chair and committee members to establish reliability. I conducted an analysis of the interviews and artifacts using NVivo software. A peer researcher reviewed the coding of one participant of the study. The peer researcher and I met to discuss the findings. The goal was to achieve an 80% agreement on the coding and analysis process. The agreement of the coding demonstrated 95% reliability.

Population

The population for this study was elementary school principals in public schools in California. According to the CDE (2023), there were 5,872 elementary schools in California at the time of this study. This population of principals who met the research criteria became the study subjects (Salkind & Frey, 2020). A target population is “a group of individuals or events from which a sample is drawn and to which results can be generalized” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 489). Because every school in California is led by a principal, it was estimated that the population for this study was 5,872 elementary school principals in California.

Sample

The sample in this study was 10 exemplary elementary principals in K-12 public schools in Southern California. The dissertation chair, committee members, and I determined the sample size to be 10 participants. I narrowed the sample further to elementary principals in Los Angeles County; approximately 89 principals were identified within Los Angeles County to meet the criteria for this study. A sample of 10

principals was used for this study. A panel of experts familiar with these participants identified those who met the criteria and sent recommendations to me. I reviewed the recommendations and invited the participants who met the established criteria. This included having served as a principal/administrator for at least 3 years and had demonstrated success in maintaining parent participation at their school site. Participants also had to rate themselves as sustaining in three of the following five criteria from the exemplary principal school site rubric (see Table 1).

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to identify the barriers exemplary elementary principals encountered as they sought to improve parent engagement at their school sites. A secondary purpose of this study was to identify and describe the strategies they used to overcome the identified barriers to implement and maintain successful parent engagement at their school sites. According to Patton (2015), when a sample size is determined, the researcher must make meaningful comparisons of participants. Dissertation committee members and I agreed that a sample of 10 participants allowed for data collection to provide information and lead to rich data. Figure 5 (repeated here for reference) provides the steps taken to determine the sample of participants for the study.

These principals have increased their parent participation from minimal to averaging 10% or more of parent participation throughout their various events. The participants were recommended for their growth with parent participation and for the workshops they offered to families, communications, and family partnerships they have created at their school sites. Purposeful convenience sampling was used when selecting the participants. The participants not only met the criteria (see Table 2) but also had

Table 1*Exemplary Principal Parent Involvement at School Site Rubric*

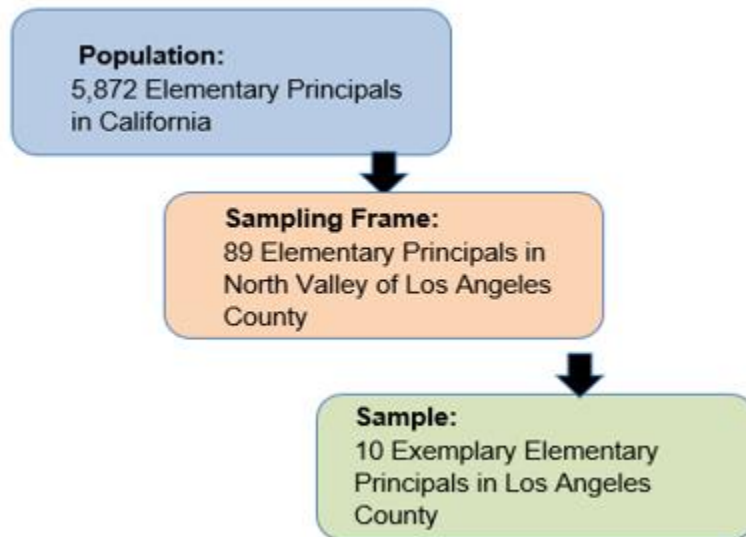
Description	Developing	Building	Sustaining
Establish a welcoming environment for family participation	The families visit the school and are welcomed as they enter the office.	The school is welcoming to families and community members. The school offers opportunities for families to be involved.	The school is a welcoming place where all families are greeted as they enter the campus. The school has a family center that is open at all times. Parent workshops are offered throughout the month. Information is provided in various languages.
The school offers parent education classes	The school shares the importance of families and teachers working together to support student learning.	The school offers parent education classes for parents. The classes are offered to parents during the school day.	The school offers parent education classes led by school staff and community members. The classes are tailored to support student learning at school and home. Parents are provided with strategies to build on parents' capacity to support learning at home.
The school communicates with families in various ways	The school keeps families informed of upcoming events using flyers and electronic notices in the languages spoken.	School staff develop connections with families through multiple two-way communication tools, including personal calls, emails and notes.	The school communicates in numerous interactive ways, both formally and informally. Using automated phone calls, emails, flyers, use of social media, and personal invitation to events.
The school ensures families have access to school leaders	Parents need to make an appointment to talk to the school principal.	School leaders are visible to families. They greet families at the gates at drop-off and pick-up.	School leaders are visible to families. They greet families at drop-off/pick-up. They meet regularly with families, in small groups, or individually. The principal and leaders provide families with different contact options.

Table 1 (continued)

Description	Developing	Building	Sustaining
The school removes barriers to family participation	The leaders meet with families to learn what would help them with their child’s learning and what barriers are impeding them from being involved in school.	The leaders survey the families to learn about their child’s needs, and meet with families to discuss their interest in workshops. They learn about the barriers impacting their involvement.	The leaders survey families, meet with families, and have assigned staff members to personally connect with families to determine their interest and support needed to reduce barriers impacting their involvement in schools. The leaders review the systems in place to ensure barriers are eliminated.

Figure 5

Population, Sampling Frame, and Sample



knowledge and experience when it came to parent involvement (Creswell, 2014). The participants were willing to participate and made themselves easily available. The participants who were contacted met the following criteria:

1. The participants have been at their school sites for 3 years or more.

2. The participants are principals at elementary schools serving preschool through fifth-grade students.
3. The participants are employed at a K–12 school district in the North Valley of Los Angeles.
4. The participants were recommended as exemplary principals in school leadership by their schools’ director, principal supervisor, or colleague.
5. Once recommended, participants self-identified as meeting at least three criteria on the rubric at the sustaining level.

Table 2

Study Participant Criteria

Participant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Participant has been at school site for 3 years or more	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Participants are elementary school principals serving preschool through fifth grade	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Participants employed at K-12 school district in North Valley of Los Angeles	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Participants recommended by school directors, supervisors, or colleagues.	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Participants met sustaining on rubric	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

Demographic Data

Ten exemplary principals who have overcome barriers to increase and sustain parent involvement at their school sites located in the North Valley of Los Angeles were selected to participate in this study. Each participant was assigned a number to maintain confidentiality. The length of time for each participant in education was over 20 years. The number of years they have been in an administrative position ranged from 8 to 17

years. Eight of the 10 participants are principals at Title I schools, and the percentage of emergent bilinguals at their school sites ranged from 2% to 80%.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

The process of the qualitative analysis began by meeting with each participant via an online platform and then analyzing the qualitative data collected. The findings discussed throughout this chapter are based on the interviews conducted that are composed of anecdotal reflections of ten exemplary principals who maintain active parent involvement at their school sites. These interviews were conducted one-on-one in which each participant shared their lived experiences as a principal who was able to sustain parent involvement at their school site. During the interviews, I attentively listened and observed the interviewee to make sense of the data (Patton, 2015). The findings of the interviews were triangulated with data from 45 artifacts. I began the data analysis process through transcribing interviews. Each participant was provided with a copy of the transcription of their interview and was asked to review and provide feedback for accuracy.

Once that was completed, I uploaded all transcribed interviews, artifacts, and observation notes into NVivo qualitative analysis software. NVivo assisted with the coding and identification of common themes found throughout the data collected. Frequency tables were created for the themes. The documents collected as artifacts were also uploaded onto NVivo using the same codes to be able to identify similar patterns as in the interviews.

Data by the Central Question and Subquestions

The discussion and the analysis of the research data were organized by the central question and the subquestions for the research study. I analyzed the data for the central question by identifying themes and the frequency of participant responses of the subquestions. There were 10 virtual interviews, seven observations, and 40 artifacts that were used for coding.

Central Research Question

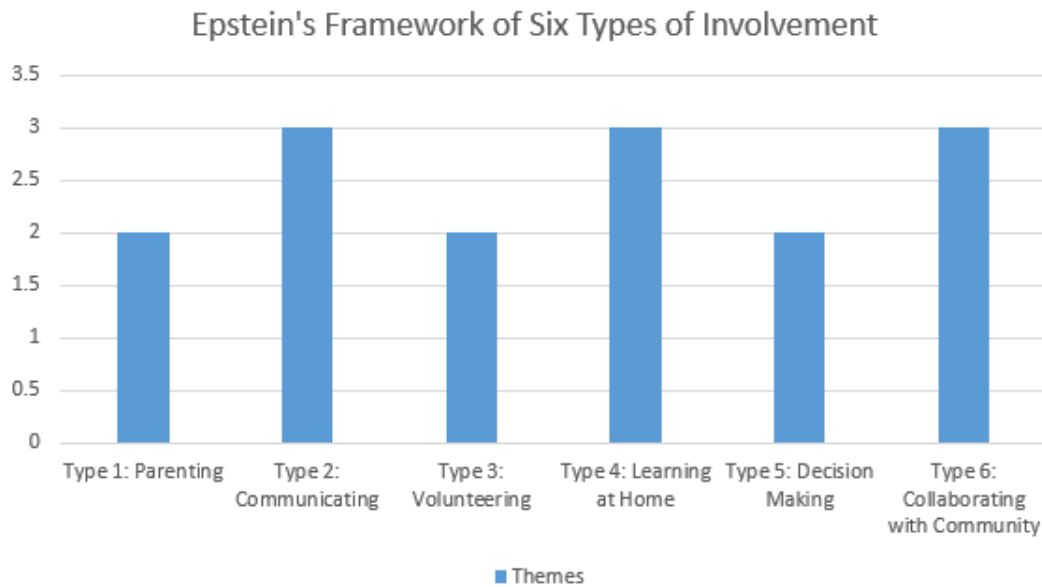
The central research question examined, “What are the lived experiences of exemplary principals who have successful parent engagement at their school sites?” I used Epstein’s (2011) six types of involvement framework to develop interview questions for this study. The six types of involvement are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. All of the participants for the study were asked the same scripted interview questions. I asked the same questions to ensure all participants were provided opportunities to discuss the same topic. The coding process resulted in 15 themes distributed across the six domains of Epstein’s six types of involvement, with two or more themes per each domain.

Communicating, learning at home, and collaborating with the community resulted in three themes. Parenting, decision making, and volunteering all resulted in two themes.

Themes were included as part of the data if a minimum of seven (70%) of the 10 participants referenced a theme. Additionally, the frequencies for each theme represented a minimum of 13% or more of total frequencies coded. Figure 6 illustrates the relative even distribution of themes per type of parent involvement.

Figure 6

Distribution of Themes per Type of Parent Involvement



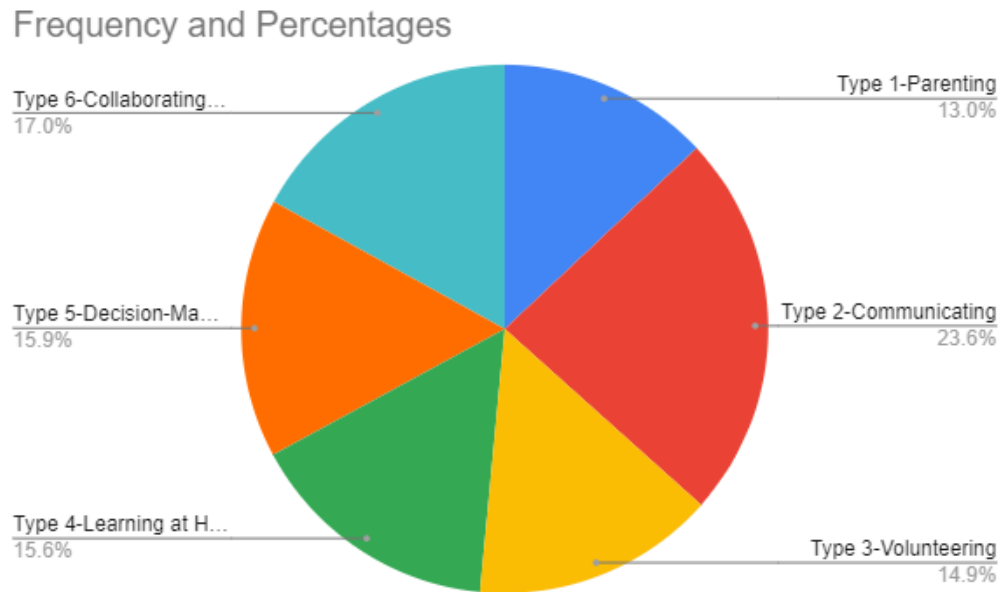
The coding process identified 276 references over Epstein's (2011) six types of involvement ranging from a minimum of 36 to 65 references based on interviews, observations and artifacts collected. The overall percentage of references per domain ranged from 13% to 23.6%. Figure 7 illustrates the reference frequency and its distribution per domain.

When reviewing the data, I found themes that were similar in the various Epstein's (2011) six types of involvement. One theme that was found in various types of parent involvement was parent workshops. That theme was identified in Type 1, parenting, and Type 4, learning at home. Another theme that was found to overlap in the types of parent involvement was strategies for parents. Strategies for parents were found in Type 1, parenting, and Type 4, learning at home. The recurring themes of parent workshops and providing strategies for parents was heard throughout the interviews. The

similarity in themes suggests that exemplary principals perceive a connection between parent workshops and strategies to be a key component of parent involvement.

Figure 7

Frequency and Percentage per Domain



In reviewing and analyzing the data collected, I identified 15 major themes. There were two to three themes per type of parent involvement. I also cross-referenced the themes to find an interdependence between themes and types of parent involvement.

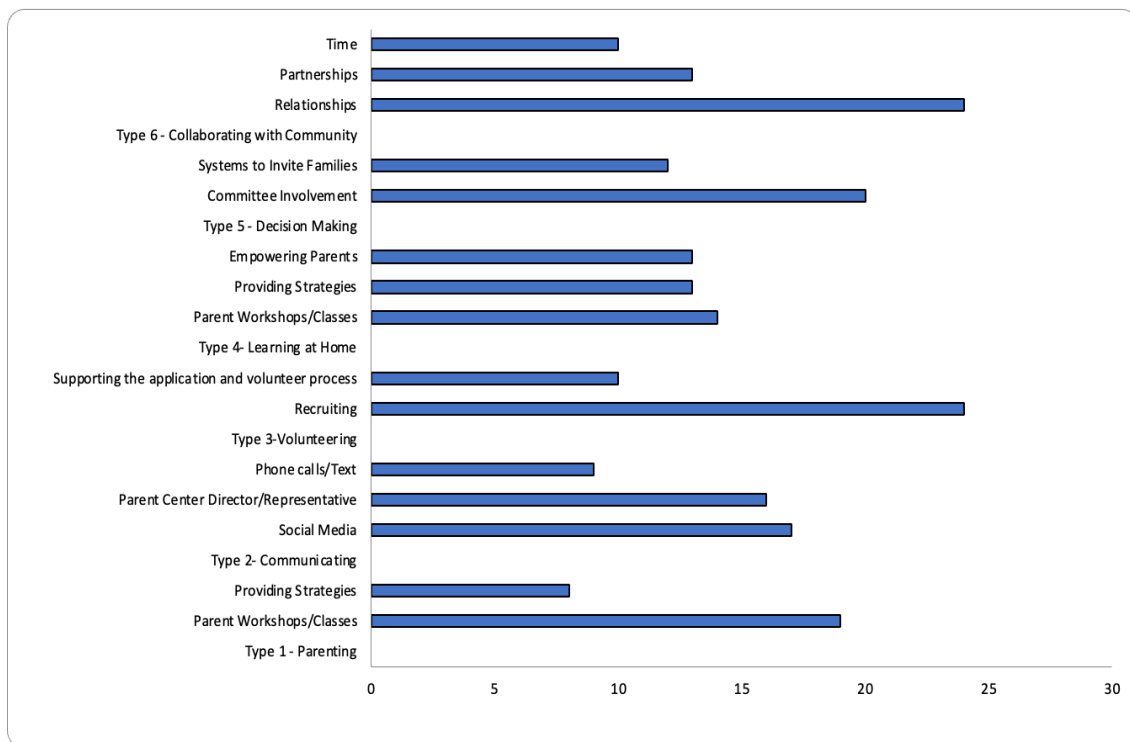
Figure 8 illustrates the reference frequency and its distribution per domain.

When reviewing the data, I found themes that were similar in the various Epstein's (2011) six types of involvement. One theme that was found in various types of parent involvement was parent workshops. That theme was identified in Type 1, parenting, and Type 4, learning at home. Another theme that was found to overlap in the types of parent involvement was strategies for parents. Strategies for parents were found

in Type 1, parenting, and Type 4, learning at home. The recurring themes of parent workshops and providing strategies for parents was heard throughout the interviews. The similarity in themes suggests that exemplary principals perceive a connection between parent workshops and strategies to be a key component of parent involvement.

Figure 8

Frequencies of References by Themes



Interview Question 1

What have you done to provide parents with information and ideas to help their children at home?

Interview Question 1 related to Epstein’s (2011) Type 1 of involvement, which focuses on parenting and how to help families establish home environments to support children as students. In analyzing the data, I found two themes that emerged from Type 1,

parenting, parent workshops/classes and providing strategies for parents. These two themes were key in providing opportunities for parents to be involved. There were 36 references obtained from interviews and artifacts representing 13% of all references derived from interviews and artifacts.

Table 3 displays the number of respondents who mentioned the theme, the percentage of the overall number of respondents, the sources for each reference, and the frequency of the references with themes referenced by at least seven of the 10 participants.

Table 3

Epstein's Type 1: Parenting

Theme/pattern	Number of respondents	Interview source	Observation source	Artifact source	Frequency of reference
Parent workshops	9	14	1	5	19
Strategies for parents	7	8	1	0	8

Note. The total number of respondents was 10.

Parent Workshops

The theme parent workshops had 19 references, having the highest frequency and was cited by nine participants. The theme frequency count for parent workshops was 52.8%. During the interviews, the exemplary principals described parent workshops/classes as providing ways for parents to help their children at home using what they have learned throughout the workshops/classes being offered by their schools. The exemplary principals shared the types of workshops that they provide for parents to provide parenting tips. Participant 1 stated,

We have a series of parent education courses that are run through our PTA. It's sponsored by our PTA. They raise money throughout the year and they're able to pay speakers to come and speak to parents about how to deal with sibling issues and how to deal with technology issues and how to create safe environments at home, and how to be supportive parents of schools. So, all these kinds of various topics on how to be champion parents.

Participant 3 shared, "Along with my parent community rep, we've had a series of workshops. I'm actually using our PSW [psychiatric social worker] as well. We provide families with workshops on raising children, positive behavior at home, and academic support at home." Participant 8 expressed the importance of having parenting workshops at her school because a lot of parents struggle with the language barriers between their children and themselves. She stated, "We do a lot of parenting classes, in addition to the academics, our parents struggle with just the changes that their kids are going through and just the divide of English and Spanish." Participant 8 also shared that she targets parents who she knows are struggling at home and personally invites them to attend the parenting classes/workshops being offered at the school.

The exemplary principals also mentioned that parent workshops/classes should start from the very beginning of the school year. Participant 6 shared that at his school, they are ready to meet with parents early in the school year to provide them with knowledge of what their children would be learning so that they can help them at home. He said,

We always start early in September. We started school in August, but by September, we had at least one after-school event per grade level. Teachers

engage the parents during a workshop to help them learn what their kids are going to be expected to learn and what they've already learned.

Participant 10 shared that surveying parents also allows for parent input on what parenting classes/workshops they feel they need and want. Participant 10 stated,

So based on the surveys and based on our parents' responses, we've done a lot of work this year on addressing mental health concerns that parents have as well as how to assist with homework, academics. We've had technology classes, but a lot of support in the areas of social, emotional intelligence, because that seems to be, right now, from a parent's perspective, their greatest concern even over academic achievement. It's the mental well-being of their child.

Artifacts that were collected for this theme included social media posts and newsletters provided by participants, in addition to one observation of a parent workshop. The artifacts had the name of the topic, dates, and location of the workshops/classes being provided to families. It was observed during the parent workshop that parents were engaged, and rapport with the principal was observed. Principals greeted parents as they entered the parent center.

Strategies for Parents

The participants referenced the theme strategies for parents eight times. The theme frequency of eight times accounted for 22% of the references. The exemplary principals described how providing strategies for parents allows them to be able to support their children at home. It also allows the parents to familiarize themselves with what is going on in the classrooms and at the school site in general. As Participant 2 expressed, "We do tea with the principal, where we give them ideas and strategies of

things to do at home.” Participant 1 also shared why providing strategies during workshops to parents helps them at home: “It helps educate and spread awareness and new tricks of the trade for parenting which is really always highly attended, and good feedback.” Participant 3 also stated how together with his psychiatric social worker, he provides behavioral strategies parents can use at home to help “parents with what they can do at home to help. And . . . if a child is having behavior difficulty at school or challenges, they’re having them at home, too. So we help with strategies to support our parents at home.”

The participants stated that many of the families who walk through their doors need support at home because they want their children to be successful, but many do not know how to help. Therefore, they want to provide families with those resources and strategies to support their children at home. Participant 3 also stated that he wants families to know that “parents don’t have to wait for a workshop, they know that if they come in and talk to counselors or talk to myself or the teacher if they are looking for support or strategies to help at home.”

Interview Question 2

What methods of communication do you use to communicate with parents?

Interview Question 2 related to Epstein’s (2011) Type 2 of involvement, which focuses on communicating and designing effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communication about school programs and children’s progress. Effective communication between parents and the school allows parents to be up to date with what is happening at their child’s school. Furthermore, positive parent–school communications benefit parents because it allows them to improve the quality of parents’ home

involvement with their children (Baker et al., 2016). Three themes emerged from the interviews regarding communicating with parents. There were 65 references for communicating with parents, which represented 23.6% of all references derived from interviews and artifacts.

Table 4 represents the number of respondents who referenced the theme, the percentage of the overall number of respondents, the sources for each of the references, and the frequency of the references with themes referenced by at least seven of the 10 participants.

Table 4

Epstein's Type 2: Communicating

Theme/pattern	Number of respondents	Interview source	Observation source	Artifact source	Frequency of reference
Phone calls/text	8	9	0	0	9
Social media	7	7	0	10	17
Parent center representative/director	9	11	1	5	16

Note. The total number of respondents was 10.

Phone Calls/Text Messages

The theme for phone calls and text messages was referenced nine times, and the theme frequency was 13%. The respondents agreed that phone calls and text messages were a key component of communicating with families. During the interview with Participant 7, she stated that texting was a quick and effective way to reach parents:

I send a message every Sunday, but then, 2 days before the event, I'll send a little text, don't forget this Thursday, blah blah blah, and then the night before, don't

forget tomorrow morning, blah blah blah! And then on the morning of, it's gonna be in 15 min, you know. Actually, I think texting is the most effective way.

Participant 7 also shared that phone calls are important, but texting was just easier for her to invite parents to events happening at the school site. Participant 2 stated that if she needed to reach a parent quickly, text messages or personal phone calls were easy for her to connect with the parent. She shared,

On a more personal level, you know, I have so many parents' numbers saved on my own cell phone. So there are certain parents where we need regular communication. And so I'm texting back and forth as well, or phone calls and personal phone calls as well.

The parents and she have a mutual understanding that this is the easiest way to communicate and be able to receive a response from a parent.

In continuing the discussion on communication, Participant 5 shared how text messaging is part of their systems of communication. It can be used individually or schoolwide, "We also have a [system] by text where we can send information, if need be, to maintain that communication." Participant 9 voiced that although her school has various ways of communicating with families, when she wanted to get a message to the families quickly, texting allowed her to do that: "We do multiple ways of communicating with our parents. If there's something short, but I need for them to know, I'll send them a text as well." Participant 4 stated they use an automated system that allows the school to communicate with parents in various ways at the same time. "We use all features of the [system], email, text messaging, and also the voicemails." The participants stated that the messages go out on a weekly basis but also use phone calls or text messages as needed.

Social Media

In focusing on the question on communication, the participants shared that social-media is another form of communication that they find to be successful in communicating with families. In the current times, communicating through social media is a modern way of interacting with families (Procentese et al., 2019). Social media was referenced 17 times with a frequency of 26.2%. The participants provided many examples of how they use social media at their school sites. Participant 4 stated that they use a school social media platform to communicate with families all the time: “Class Dojo is another messaging tool that we use a lot and so my coordinators, my assistant principals, and myself are always using Class Dojo as well for reminders to parents.” Participant 2 also shared that when communicating with parents, they have various social media platforms they use: “Well, we have Class Dojo, we have Blackboard Connect, we have our website.” Participant 10 stated that at her schools, they use various ways to communicate with their families and keep them informed with what is happening at the school. She stated, “In addition, the website, you know, our social media accounts are kept up to date.”

Participant 5 shared using Class Dojo as well to communicate with her parents:

We have Class Dojo stories, which is [for] everyone. I just put something from the local library on Dojo stories. I remember it got 800 views. So all the parents kinda go and see what’s new. And that’s something that goes to all the parents.

By the number of views the post received, she was able to see that her families received the information regarding the local library. Participant 8 also stated that

although various forms of communication are used at her school, the information is always available for parents: “It’s on our social media. It’s on our website.”

Parent Center Director/Representative

The third theme in the Type 2 of involvement was parent center director/representative. Participants communicated that they have parent center directors/representatives at their school sites who assist with reaching out to parents. There was only one participant who did not have this position at the school, and the role of parent center director/representative was held by the PTA president. Parent center director/representative was mentioned 16 times, which included artifacts with a frequency of 24.6% Participant 3 stated, “My parent community rep serves as the liaison ... anybody who’s pretty much not in the classroom as well.” Participant 6 shared, “Parent outreach ... our family center directors that do that for us. And they are paid through the community schools grant.” Participant 10 mentioned, “We have a family center director at every site, and that is someone who is really kind of become the point person, but in addition, it’s all the administration.” When talking about the parent center directors/representatives, many of the participants also mentioned that it is a team effort and it’s everyone working together to communicate with families about what is going on at the school.

The participants also mentioned that their parent center director/representatives are also well liked and respected by the parents. This allows parents to feel welcome and come to participate at school. Participant 5 stated,

Our parent center director, ... she is kind of our liaison, our parent outreach person, and Ms. [Happy] does a great job of keeping parents involved at the school and bringing more in. She's trying her best to get more, more involvement.

Participant 9 shared, "My community rep ... does all our community outreach, and she is very professional, and the parents respond well to her." Last, Participant 8 shared, "My parent rep reaches out to families. I give her a list of names to call ... I would say 99.9% of the parents that we do outreach that way come, and they appreciate it, and it gets better."

Artifacts were collected through their schools' website and social media platforms. The school artifacts were accessible by visiting the schools' websites. Information on upcoming events, name of parent center director/representative listed on the website, and links to connect to the schools' social media were available on their websites. One parent center was visited, and observations included the environment of the room, the number of parents participating, and the accessibility of location of the room. The parent center had coffee available for the parents who were either attending a workshop or preparing materials for classrooms. Parents were observed to be engaged, and the parent center director was interacting with the parents.

Interview Question 3

What types of strategies are used to improve and maintain parent volunteers?

Interview Question 1 related to Epstein's (2011) Type 3 of parental involvement, which is volunteering. As described by Epstein (2018), volunteers are those who support the goal of a school and children's learning development not just at the school site but also at home. The participants shared various ways they support volunteers at their

schools; two themes emerged from the interviews. There were 41 references for volunteering. Of those 41 references recruitment was referenced 24 times, and the frequency for recruitment was 58.5%.

The theme of supporting with the application and process was referenced 10 times, and the frequency was 24.4%. Table 5 displays the number of respondents who referenced the theme, the percentage to the overall number of respondents, the sources for each of the references, and the frequency of the references with themes referenced by at least seven of the 10 participants. For this theme, all participants referenced recruitment during their interviews.

Table 5

Type 3: Volunteering

Theme/pattern	Number of respondents	Interview source	Observation source	Artifact source	Frequency of reference
Recruiting	10	23	0	1	24
Supporting the application and volunteer process	9	9	1	1	10

Note. The total number of respondents was 10.

Recruiting

The participants shared that the recruitment process starts early in the year to provide multiple opportunities for parents to be involved. Participant 2 shared how she recruits families at the beginning of the school year:

At the beginning of the year, we did this year too, we had a picnic. We had opportunities for them to complete their applications. At that moment, we had

computers. My coordinator had set up computers for the parents to come in during the picnic and start completing the applications.

Participant 6 stated,

At the beginning of the year, we tell teachers, if you want volunteers please share the handbook with your parents at orientation. That's one big section of orientation and a lot of parents will pick up the application and turn it in. And then, after that, whatever events we have that we need, volunteers will reach out to them because we have all their information.

Participant 9 stated,

Well, we start like, I said, in the beginning of the year, where we get them to sign their name with their contact information, and then they may get home and forget that they, you know, even signed up for this. But we'll call, and we'll say, "Oh, remember, you signed up to pass out candy at trunk or treat. Oh, yeah thank you for reminding me or thanks." So we try to keep the parents involved. We try to give multiple opportunities ... we need volunteers for our trunk or treat, we need volunteers for valet.

Some of the participants also shared that when recruiting volunteers, they are tactful and intentional. Participant 1 shared,

We don't ignore the dads, I think, traditionally a lot of schools think of volunteers and they think of the moms. And that's just traditionally what it is. But we are intentional with trying to recruit dads, and that starts with a specific event called the Pancake Breakfast. So, first, it's always on the first week of the football season, September, whatever it is, tenth? We have a huge community event called

[school name] Stacks, and it's put out by all the [school name] dads, and they flip pancakes and flapjacks and make bacon, and it's all dads period, probably 50 of them out there that set up the tables and the grills and their cooking, and that gets all the dads involved.

Participant 2 shared that she keeps campus open later to accommodate working parents who want to help after school hours: "We have our PTA, ... we always have that core group. They're always very welcoming ... I have made the campus available after hours as well. For different events and also volunteer opportunities." Participant 8 also stated that one way of recruiting volunteers is signing up parents who are already at the school site:

What we do ... all the [English as a second language] class, they're all cleared volunteers like anybody who's like a regular coming they're all clear, like I make sure [Susan] clears them, and we offer them the application, and we help them fill it out. So we have a lot of volunteers which is great.

Artifacts collected for this theme included volunteer applications provided through the district's website.

Supporting the Application and Volunteer Process

The participants who shared that their schools provide support with the volunteer application and process ensured that those parents received assistance from someone on their team. Participant 1 stated, "We probably have, I don't even know, hundreds of signed up registered volunteers, through the [school name] process. We have a volunteer rep who walks new parents through that process." Participant 2 stated "The office manager manages all the volunteer applications, and she's constantly reaching out to

parents about what they have left to complete as part of that application process.”

Participant 4 conveyed that her parent center director directly helps parents with the process: “Our parent center director handles all the volunteer processing because it’s a very convoluted process ... It’s really time consuming ... is constantly working and processing volunteers.” Last, Participant 9 took time to have meetings with those who were interested as a way of supporting the process: “I did four volunteer trainings, anybody that was interested, and then we walked them through the process.” The participants assisted parents with the process to ensure the applications were completed, submitted, and processed.

Artifacts were collected through their schools’ website and social media platforms. During the visit to one parent center, I observed that the parent center director was walking a parent through the volunteer application process. The parent center director was observed to be kind and patient with the parent.

Interview Question 4

What types of workshops do you offer to your families?

Interview Question 4 related to Epstein’s (2011) Type 4 of parent involvement, which is learning at home. Families should be provided with information and ideas about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning. Learning at home can be done in various ways. Parents can interact with their children in activities in the home and within the community. Parents can also encourage their children to complete assignments and monitor what they are doing and have discussions. Three themes emerged from the interviews of exemplary principals about learning at home. The three themes were, empowering parents, providing

strategies for parents, and parent workshops. There were 43 references for learning at home with 15.6% derived from interviews and artifacts. The theme empowering parents was referenced 13 times, and the frequency for that theme was 30.2%. The theme for providing strategies for parents was referenced 13 times and also had a frequency of 30.2%; the theme parent workshops was referenced a total of 14 times with a frequency of 32.6%.

Table 6 displays the number of respondents who referenced the various themes, the percentage for the overall number of respondents, the sources for each of the references, and the frequency of the references with themes referenced by at least seven of the 10 participants.

Table 6

Type 4: Learning at Home

Theme/pattern	Number of respondents	Interview source	Observation source	Artifact source	Frequency of reference
Empowering parents	8	13	1	0	13
Providing strategies for parents	7	10	1	3	13
Parent workshops	7	9	1	5	14

Note. The total number of respondents was 10.

Empowering Parents

Eight of the 10 exemplary principals indicated that the goal for providing workshops for parents was to educate and empower parents. The participants shared that they provide various workshops for families to be able to support their children at home with homework and other curricular activities. Epstein's (2011) Type 4, which is learning

at home, states that homework and activities to be done at home should provide families with opportunities to discuss and interact with each other. Participant 2 stated that their goal is to “get parents educated about how to best help their child right? And get them involved in their child’s education, so support education and then involvement.”

Participant 7 also shared that workshops are offered for parents to know what their children are learning: “Parents need to know where their kids are at in the sequence of their learning.” Participant 8 stated,

I want our parents to directly work with our students for student achievement. I want them ... to work too. I tell them, you know, if you want to see your son, you know, do better graduate and go to college, you have to help him, because it’s hard for him, too, and you have to support him.

Providing Strategies for Parents

Another theme that was popular with the participants was providing strategies for parents. They provide strategies for families so that parents can implement them at home. Participant 2 stated, “The parent education branch for student achievement foundation offers a variety of workshops ... Helping your child with homework, establishing that environment, math strategies.” Participant 5 shared that her team provides strategies that help with engaging children at home: “Sometimes at home, kids don’t want to do the work, so it wasn’t just showing them how to do the work, but how to engage the students.”

Participant 8 shared that members of her team provide families with strategies that they can use at home: “We have our coaches and they do all the academic and

instructional strategies.” The participants agreed that providing strategies correlates with empowering parents because they are providing them with the tools they need.

Parent Workshops

The theme of parent workshops was also key when the participants discussed Epstein’s (2011) Type 4 of parent involvement. The participants had mentioned parent workshops and classes in Type 1 of parent involvement that were targeted to assist parents with parenting tips. The parent workshops in this section were more academically based.

Participant 3 shared that at their school they provide academic workshops for families so they can understand what their children are learning at home: “We’ve done the academic part of I-ready, [English language arts], math, how to help at home with Eureka Math, so we make sure we do all that.” Participant 6 also shared that it is important that parents have knowledge of their child’s curriculum: “Parent workshops that are very skill based, especially in the primary grades, understanding what kids need to learn.” Participant 10 also shared that workshops are provided to families to help them support their children at home: “We have our parent workshops, and so we host those through our expanded learning program and those are held on campus to help families navigate, you know, grade level homework or platforms we’ve provided in services to families.”

The participants agreed that parents participate in workshops when the workshops provided are workshops parents are interested in and tailored to their needs. Participant 5 shared, “We want to make sure we’re providing classes that will engage parents and be

useful. You don't want to waste anybody's time, and the parents have said that they're awesome."

Leaning at home, Epstein's (2011) Type 4 of the six types of parent involvement, was an area in which participants shared a lot during the interview on how they try to provide workshops for the families that can empower the parents. Some stated that language was a barrier for some of the families. However, they provided the families various ways to help their children even if language was a barrier. Artifacts collected from schools websites and also from fliers were shared by participants. The artifacts shared information of workshops, time, and dates they were scheduled. They provided information about food being provided and also translation services. All three themes were observed during the observation that was conducted during a parent workshop.

Interview Question 5

How do you involve families in the decision making process of the school?

Interview Question 5 related to Epstein's (2011) Type 5 of parent involvement, which is decision making. In this type of parent involvement, Epstein (2018) stated that during the decision making process, there is a partnership in which parents and schools share views and actions toward a common goal. The participants shared the importance of having partnerships with families to ensure their voices are heard and that families play an important role in the decision-making process of the school site.

There were 44 references in this domain with a frequency of 15.9%. There were two themes that emerged from the interviews and artifacts. The themes were committee involvement and systems to invite parents to join the committees. All 10 participants referenced committee involvement. There were 20 references for committee involvement,

and the frequency for the theme was 45.5%. The second theme of systems to invite parents to join the committees was referenced 12 times with a frequency of 27.3%.

Table 7 displays the number of respondents who referenced the theme, the percentage of the overall number of respondents, the sources for each of the references, and the frequency of the references with themes referenced by at least seven of the 10 participants.

Table 7

Type 5: Decision Making

Theme/pattern	Number of respondents	Interview source	Observation source	Artifact source	Frequency of reference
Committee involvement	10	10	0	10	20
Systems in place	9	12	0	0	12

Note. The total number of respondents was 10.

Committee Involvement

The theme of committee involvement was referenced by all 10 participants. They stated they have the required committees such as school site council and English learner advisory committee (ELAC). Some committees were specific to their schools, but all 10 participants shared the importance of having parent leaders on board.

Participant 3 shared, “Well, we have our school site council and our ELAC ... this is the decision making body that helps determine what funds are spent.” Participant 4 explained how the parents in these committees support the decision-making process at the school site: “Our parents that are really interested in the budget are always the ones that are sitting on the school site council. Our parents whose students are English language learners or emergent bilinguals; those are on our ELAC.” Participant 5 included the

importance of educating the parents in the process: “We do have meetings with them and involve them and then give them knowledge about how everything works spent and getting parents input on, that is very important for everyone as well.” In discussion with the participants, I learned some felt that getting input from a diverse set of parents also helps with hearing everyone’s voice. Participant 8 found that her school is experiencing lots of changes with the demographics representing her school:

I love the parent representation and the teacher representation because they bring in their insight, too ... What’s amazing is we’re getting different types of parents, right? Like, I have a large population of Russian immigrant families, and some from Ukraine and Armenia. I’m getting some more Armenian. I’m getting some African American parents. It’s a little bit more diverse, and they ask questions that are a little bit more straightforward.

Although school site councils and ELAC were mentioned by all 10 participants, there were also other committees in which parents are active participants and part of any decisions that are made. Participant 9 shared the other committees at her school site:

We have parents that sit on our safety committee and they give input to the school and their voices are heard. We have a character and discipline committee, and we have parents that sit on there. So they are part of and they are apprised of what we’re discussing and what we’re doing here and they give input.

Participant 10 has members of her school not only being part of committees at her school site but also branching out to represent her school within the organization: “In addition, in the past we’ve had parents from my site, who serve on our board of directors

for the whole organization. So families definitely have different opportunities to be leaders and be part of the decision-making process.”

Systems in Place

The participants communicated that they have systems in place to ensure parents are participating in the committees. Some shared that many times it is the same parents that want to be involved. However, they are constantly inviting and recruiting new members. Participant 1 has a system in which he talks about the committees and then recruits members during big events that are highly attended by families. He shared,

We invite at the volunteer fair. [We] advertise all of our councils that they can be a part of, holding elections publicly so everyone feels that they're involved. Tying those elections and publications to big events like back to school night when everyone's here. Don't take those large moments for granted ... Talk about whatever you want to talk about because they're all sitting right there.

Participant 3 expressed that communication was key in inviting families:

So, we invite parents to come ... every month when we have the meeting. I communicate it through our phone calls, through our text messages, with a flyer, as we're letting them know. Even if you're not a member, you're more than welcome to attend.

Participant 10 shared that communication is part of her system to invite parents: “A lot of communication. So you know, sending paperwork home, obviously with students sharing it at our informational night meetings, putting it on our website, on our messenger system, [and] on our social media.”

Advertising the meetings was something that was mentioned by participants as well. Participants stated that with the busy schedules families have, it is important to provide them with reminders of meetings. Artifacts were collected from schools' websites and also from fliers shared from participants. The artifacts included information of committees on campus, date and time of meetings, and links on how to sign up and who to contact if interested in joining a committee.

Interview Question 6

What amount of time do you spend collaborating with families within the community? Does the dynamic change when outreach is done?

Interview Question 6 related to Epstein's (2011) Type 6 of parental involvement, which is collaborating with the community. Collaborating with the community involves providing families and students with information on resources available within the community that can enhance student learning opportunities (Epstein, 2018). During the interviews, the participants shared that relationships are what they have built with the families, and partnerships are what they have built with various organizations throughout the community.

There were 47 references in this domain with a frequency of 17%. There were three themes that emerged from the interviews and artifacts. The themes were time, relationships, and partnerships. The theme time was referenced 10 times with a frequency of 21.3%. The theme relationships was referenced 24 times with a frequency of 51.1%, and the theme partnerships was referenced 13 times, and the frequency for the theme was 27.7%.

Table 8 displays the number of respondents who referenced the theme, the percentage of the overall number of respondents, the sources for each of the references, and the frequency of the references with themes referenced by at least seven of the 10 participants.

Table 8

Type 6: Collaborating With the Community

Theme/pattern	Number of respondents	Interview source	Observation source	Artifact source	Frequency of reference
Time	8	10	0	0	10
Relationships	8	22	0	0	22
Partnerships	7	8	0	0	8

Note. The total number of respondents was 10.

Time

The participants stated that time plays a big part in being able to collaborate with the community. The participants shared the various ways they interact with the school’s community. For example, some shared that they interact with the families at the beginning of the day and at the end of day. They shared the importance of making time to be seen and being present. Participant 3 is dedicated to being out in the mornings and end of day at his school site. He stated,

I go out and walk in the mornings and at dismissal ... of community outreach ... That community outreach goes a long way in that visibility part again. So, being out there at recess ... beginning of the day, at the end of the day, going out in the office when it’s really busy, you know. Busy times to, you know, outreach going over to the workshops ... I make myself visible.

Participant 7 was not able to think about how much time she puts into collaborating with the community:

I wouldn't even be able to put my finger on it, because it's so pervasive throughout my day: 3 min here, 10 min there, the hour meeting that we have once a month on Thursday, the 2-hr meeting that we have with PTA. You know, the interacting. I wouldn't even know how to put a number on it, right?

In that same feeling, Participant 4 shared that it takes a lot of her time to collaborate with the community. In answering the question, she provided the amount of time she usually spends collaborating with the community:

Gosh! How much of my time? It's a good amount ... It does take a lot of your time and it's after hours as well ... it's my weekend, and after I'm off the clock, I ... probably a good, maybe 15 to 20 hrs for that month that I spent planning it and developing the flyers and communicating it, also attending PTA meetings because they were helping me with it...it takes a lot of time.

Although not all the participants who were interviewed had a PTA at their school site, many found that they spent a good amount of time collaborating with the PTA. Those that did have the PTA shared the same feeling as Participant 9: "I'd say, 3 to 4 hrs a week working, talking to my PTA, and yeah, having them work outreach. And it's a lot. But in the end, it's worth it." The participants spend much of their time during the day, after hours, and weekends doing outreach and collaborating with the community because at the end, they are there to provide opportunities for families to be involved.

Relationships

Another theme that was shared by eight of the 10 participants was relationships. The participants spoke about building relationships with the families but also providing opportunities for parents to build relationships with each other. Participant 2 stated that being present and spending time with parents helps build relationships: “I think what you are working on, just continues. It helps to build that trust and build that relationship. So the more time spent, the more people feel welcome and encouraged to participate a lot.” Participant 5 stated that she took it upon herself to learn Spanish to communicate with her parents:

I made a big effort to also learn Spanish, so I don't generally need translation. I could speak Spanish ... I had a lot of newcomers. I was annoyed when someone had to translate ... that's been also a wonderful thing. I feel very much a part of the community, because I can communicate with them, and when I have meetings with parents, it is very, very seldom that I need a translator.

Participant 7 wants to provide opportunities for parents while they have fun at activities planned at school: “Well, they have to be having fun ... and what's more important is ... trying to create an environment where they get to know each other. Parents are making friends with each other.”

Participant 9 shared that she attends all events and is also outside for the community to see her and get to know her: “I think part of parent engagement is building long, lasting relationships. So yes, I think the more that they know you, and the more familiar you are with them, the more the relationship is established.” Participant 10 also agreed that when the parents know them and see them, a relationship emerges: “You

really have to work on relationships. Everything starts with relationships. Because when you have a relationship, you have trust, and when you have trust, then you have participation.”

Partnerships

The last theme in collaborating with the community was partnerships. Although relationships and partnerships may sound the same, for this study, relationship is a term that was used to describe a relationship between the school and families. Partnership is being used as a relationship that has been established with organizations within the community that support the school sites and families. The participants shared the partnerships they have built throughout the years. Participant 6 stated that he has a strong partnership with the local community library: “We created a strong partnership with the library...we invited her to the school, and then she would invite us to the library. We’ve done classes there for the parents in reading or language arts.” Participant 8 shared how she has partnerships with different organizations within close proximity to her school: “We have a lot of community partnerships. I think, the two most important ones that, I believe, are the partnership with [the park] across the street from [our school] and Costco.” Just as Participant 6 and 8, Participant 10 has partnerships with different organizations within her community:

We became ... friendly with the neighborhood council ... We’re actually even right next door to a fire department. The librarian has become our best friend at the local library, parks and rec center nearby. So we are constantly engaging, communicating and working alongside and supporting each other.

Participants stated that maintaining partnerships with organizations within their community allows them to bring resources to the school site. Parents know that there are organizations outside of the school that can provide needed services.

Summary of Each Type of Parent Involvement

Chapter IV outlined the methodology for data collected and shared the findings of this phenomenological qualitative study. The study described what exemplary principals have done to overcome barriers in increasing and sustaining parent involvement at their school sites. Epstein's (2011) six types of involvement framework was used to develop the research questions and to see how these principals have used the six different types of involvement, parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community, to support parent involvement at their school. The chapter began with a restatement of the purpose, the central research question, and the subquestions. The chapter also reviewed the population, sampling frame, and sample used for the study. The findings presented included the lived experience of ten exemplary principals, collected through interviews and artifacts. The data were coded and resulted in 15 themes among the six constructs. The themes are summarized from most to least frequently referenced.

Type 2: Communicating

Communicating was the type of parent involvement that was referenced the most with 65 references comprising 23.6% of all references. The following three themes emerged from the data collected:

- Parent center director/representative was referenced by 90% of the participants. The theme yielded the highest number of references in the six types of parent involvement, representing 24.6% of the data coded.
- Phone calls/text was referenced by 80% of the participants and represented 13.8% of the data coded in the Type 2 of parent involvement, communication.
- Social media was referenced by 70% of the participants and represented 26.2% of the data coded in the Type 2 of parent involvement, communication.

In the analysis of the data collected, it is evident that the exemplary principals who participated in this study perceive communication to have a great impact on reaching out to families and providing them with information on events, workshops, and meetings that are occurring at the school site. Communicating with families provides them with opportunities to be informed.

Type 6: Collaborating with the Community

Collaborating with the community was the second most frequently referenced type of involvement with 47 references, comprising 17% of all references. The following three themes emerged from the data collected:

- Relationships was referenced by 80% of the participants. The theme represented 51.1% of the data coded in the Type 6 of parent involvement, collaborating with the community.
- Time was referenced by 80% of the participants. The theme represented 21.3% of the data coded in the Type 6 of parent involvement, collaborating with the community.

- Partnerships was referenced by 70% of the participants and represented 27.7% of the data coded in the Type 6 of parent involvement, collaborating with the community.

In an analysis of the collected data, the findings demonstrate the exemplary principals agree that collaborating with the community supports parent involvement at the school site.

Type 5: Decision Making

Decision making was the third most referenced type of parental involvement. Decision making was referenced 44 times comprising 15.9% of all references. The following two themes emerged from the data collected:

- Committee involvement was referenced by 100% of the participants. The theme yielded the highest number of references in the decision making type of parent involvement, representing 45.5% of the data coded in the Type 5 of parent involvement, decision making.
- Systems to invite families to join committees was referenced by 90% of the participants and represented 27.3% of the data coded in the Type 5 of parent involvement, decision making.

The analysis of the collected data indicated that parents play a key role in the decision-making process of the school. All participants shared that they involve parents in the decision-making process by inviting them to participate in the various committees established at their school sites.

Type 4: Learning at Home

Learning at home was the fourth most referenced type of parental involvement. It was referenced 43 times, comprising 15.6% of all references. The following three themes emerged from the data collected:

- Empowering parents was referenced by 80% of the participants. The theme yielded 13 references, representing 30.2% of the data coded in the Type 4 of parent involvement, learning at home.
- Parent workshops were referenced by 70% of the participants and represented in the Type 4 of parent involvement, learning at home.
- Providing strategies was referenced by 70% of the participants and represented 30.2% of the data coded in the Type 4 of parent involvement, learning at home.

The analysis of the collected data indicated that participants perceived the Type 4 of parental involvement, learning at home, to be key in providing opportunities for families to be in school and learn strategies and techniques that empower them to help their children at home.

Type 3: Volunteering

Volunteering was the fifth most referenced construct with 41 references, comprising 14.9% of all references. The following two themes emerged:

- Recruiting was referenced by 100% of the participants. The theme yielded the highest number of references in the Type 3 of parental involvement, representing 58.5% of the data coded in the Type 3 of parent involvement, volunteering.

- Supporting the application process was referenced by 90% of the participants and represented 24.4% of the data coded in the Type 3 of parent involvement, volunteering.

In the analysis of the data collected, the findings indicated exemplary principals find ways to support parents to become volunteers at their school sites. They have established ways to support this process.

Type 1: Parenting

Parenting was the sixth most referenced type of parental involvement with 36 references, comprising 13% of all references. The following two themes emerged from the data collected:

- Parent workshops/classes was referenced by 90% of the participants. The theme yielded the highest number of references in the Type 1 of parental involvement, representing 52.8% of the data coded in the Type 1 of parent involvement, parenting.
- Providing strategies for parents was referenced by 70% of the participants and represented 22.2% of the data coded in the Type 1 of parent involvement, parenting.

The analysis of the data collected indicated that exemplary principals provide workshops and strategies to provide parents with information to help families at home. The participants ranked parenting in sixth place.

Chapter V provides a more in-depth discussion of the findings. Chapter V includes the major findings, unexpected findings, conclusions, implications for action, and recommendations. Chapter V concludes with final remarks and reflections.

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

This qualitative phenomenological study explored the lived experience of exemplary principals who have overcome barriers to increase and sustain parent involvement at their school sites. Epstein's (2011) six types of parent involvement were used to see how these principals incorporate them to sustain and maintain parent involvement. The participants shared their experiences addressing the six types: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community to involve families and sustain parent involvement.

Chapter V begins with the purpose of the study, the central research question, and the subquestions. The chapter also includes the research methodology, data collection procedures, and population sample. The chapter presents an analysis of the data generated from in-depth, semi-structured interviews, observations, and artifacts. The analysis revealed 17 themes, six major findings, and two unexpected findings. The chapter includes conclusions, implications for action, and recommendations for future studies. The chapter concludes with final remarks and reflections.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to identify the barriers exemplary elementary principals encountered as they sought to improve parent engagement at their school sites. A secondary purpose of this study was to identify and describe the strategies they used to overcome the identified barriers to implement and maintain successful parent engagement at their school sites.

Research Question

What are the lived experiences of exemplary principals who have successful parent engagement at their school sites?

Research Subquestions

1. What barriers do exemplary elementary principals encounter as they seek to improve parent engagement at their school sites?
2. What strategies do exemplary elementary principals use to overcome the identified barriers to implement and maintain successful parent engagement at their school sites?

Methodology

This qualitative phenomenological study incorporated interviews with ten exemplary principals from Los Angeles County. The primary data collected for this study were recorded and transcribed interviews, observations, and a review of artifacts. This study's interview protocols include 12 semistructured questions, which the dissertation chair and committee members reviewed. Participants who agreed to participate in the study received an invitation letter (see Appendix B) via email to explain the research study and their participation.

Interviews were scheduled by email using an appointment scheduling platform that allowed the participants to select a convenient time and date for both. After scheduling and confirming a date and time for interviews, the researcher emailed participants an informed consent form (see Appendix G), interview questions (see Appendix C), exemplary principal rubric (see Appendix H), and UMass Global Research Participant's Bill of Rights (see Appendix I).

Participants who needed clarification of the study were allowed to ask questions pertaining to the research prior to their interview. All university requirements and guidelines were followed to protect the confidentiality of the participants. Before data gathering, I ensured that the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative certification (see Appendix J) and UMass Global IRB approval (see Appendix F) were received. I adhered to all university guidelines to ensure the confidentiality of each participant.

While conducting the interviews, I followed the interview protocols for all 10 participants. All interviews were conducted via the Zoom web-based platform using a password-protected account. The participants were informed that the interviews would be recorded. The interviews varied in time and lasted between 42 and 56 min. After the interviews, I transcribed each interview. The transcripts were shared with the participants to receive feedback from them and to ensure the accuracy of the data. The data from the interviews were triangulated by the artifacts that were collected.

I gathered artifacts from the participant schools' websites and social media accounts to support interview data. I also contacted the participants and requested artifacts to be sent via email. Participants shared flyers, event invitations, and newsletters they use to communicate and invite families to events. I also conducted seven observations of various activities, allowing me to observe various activities. I visited a parent center, attended a workshop, and observed the interactions of principals and parents. I was able to document my observations by collecting observational notes. A peer researcher reviewed the coding of one participant in the study. The peer researcher met with me to discuss the findings. The goal was to achieve an 80% agreement on the coding and analysis process. The agreement of the coding demonstrated 95% reliability.

Population

The population for this study was elementary school principals in public schools in California. According to the California Department of Education (2023), there are 5,872 elementary schools in California. This population of principals who met the research criteria were the study subjects (Salkind & Frey, 2020). A target population is “a group of individuals or events from which a sample is drawn and to which results can be generalized” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 489). Because a principal leads every school in California, it was estimated that the population for this study is 5,872 elementary school principals in California.

Sample

The sample in this study was 10 elementary exemplary principals in K-12 public schools in Southern California. The dissertation chair, committee members, and I determined the sample size would be 10 participants. I narrowed the sample further to elementary principals in Los Angeles County; approximately 89 principals were identified within Los Angeles County to meet the criteria for this study. A sample of 10 principals was used for this study. A panel of experts familiar with these participants identified those who met the criteria and sent recommendations. I reviewed the recommendation and invited the participants who met the criteria, had been principals/administrators for 3 years, and had demonstrated success in maintaining parent participation at their school site. Each participant also had the rating of sustaining in three of the following criteria from the exemplary principal school site rubric in Table 1 (repeated here for ease of reference):

Table 1*Exemplary Principal Parent Involvement at School Site Rubric*

Description	Developing	Building	Sustaining
Establish a welcoming environment for family participation	The families visit the school and are welcomed as they enter the office.	The school is welcoming to families and community members. The school offers opportunities for families to be involved.	The school is a welcoming place where all families are greeted as they enter the campus. The school has a family center that is open at all times. Parent workshops are offered throughout the month. Information is provided in various languages.
The school offers parent education classes	The school shares the importance of families and teachers working together to support student learning.	The school offers parent education classes for parents. The classes are offered to parents during the school day.	The school offers parent education classes led by school staff and community members. The classes are tailored to support student learning at school and home. Parents are provided with strategies to build on parents' capacity to support learning at home.
The school communicates with families in various ways	The school keeps families informed of upcoming events using flyers and electronic notices in the languages spoken.	School staff develop connections with families through multiple two-way communication tools, including personal calls, emails and notes.	The school communicates in numerous interactive ways, both formally and informally. Using automated phone calls, emails, flyers, use of social media, and personal invitation to events.
The school ensures families have access to school leaders	Parents need to make an appointment to talk to the school principal.	School leaders are visible to families. They greet families at the gates at drop-off and pick-up.	School leaders are visible to families. They greet families at drop-off/pick-up. They meet regularly with families, in small groups, or individually. The principal and leaders provide families with different contact options.

Table 1 (continued)

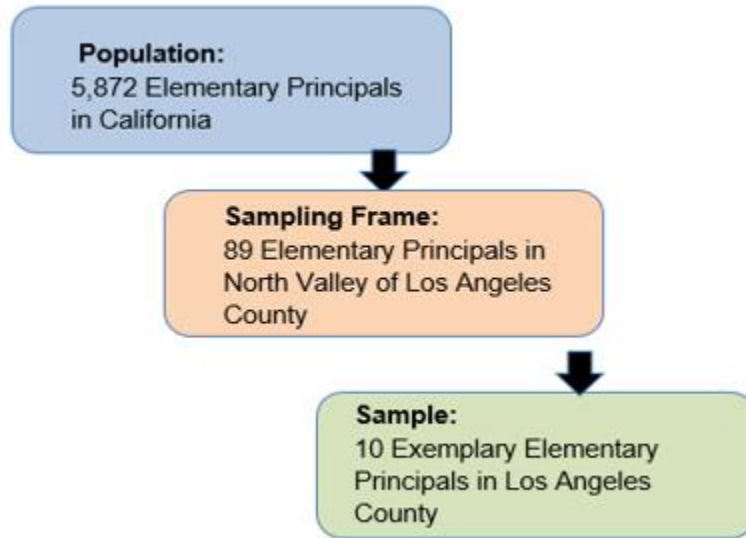
Description	Developing	Building	Sustaining
The school removes barriers to family participation	The leaders meet with families to learn what would help them with their child's learning and what barriers are impeding them from being involved in school.	The leaders survey the families to learn about their child's needs, and meet with families to discuss their interest in workshops. They learn about the barriers impacting their involvement.	The leaders survey families, meet with families, and have assigned staff members to personally connect with families to determine their interest and support needed to reduce barriers impacting their involvement in schools. The leaders review the systems in place to ensure barriers are eliminated.

The purpose of the research was to find the barriers that exemplary principals encountered and how they worked to overcome barriers to sustain parent involvement at their school sites. According to Patton (2015), when a sample size is determined, researchers must make meaningful comparisons of participants. Dissertation committee members and I agreed that a sample of 10 participants allowed data collection to provide information and lead to rich data. Figure 5 (repeated here for ease of reference) provides the steps taken to determine the sample of participants for the study.

These principals increased their parent participation from minimal to averaging 10% or more of parent participation throughout various events. The participants were recommended for their growth with parent participation and for the workshops they offer to families, communications, and family partnerships they created at their school sites. Purposeful convenience sampling was used when selecting the participants. The participants not only met the criteria (see Table 2, repeated here for ease of reference), but also had the characteristics, knowledge, and experiences when it came to parent involvement (Creswell, 2014). The participants were willing to participate and made

Figure 5

Population, Sampling Frame, and Sample



themselves available easily. The participants who were contacted met the following criteria:

1. The participants have been at their school sites for 3 years or more.
2. The participants are principals at elementary schools serving preschool through fifth-grade students.
3. The participants are employed at a K -12 school district in the north Valley of Los Angeles.
4. Their school director, principal supervisor, and colleague recommended the participants as exemplary principals in school leadership.
5. Once recommended, participants self-identified meeting at least three criteria on the rubric at the “sustaining” level.

Table 2*Study Participant Criteria*

Participant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Participant has been at school site for 3 years or more	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Participants are elementary school principals serving preschool through fifth grade	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Participants employed at K-12 school district in North Valley of Los Angeles	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Participants recommended by school directors, supervisors, or colleagues.	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Participants met sustaining on rubric	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

Demographic Data

Ten exemplary principals who have overcome barriers to increase and sustain parent involvement at their school sites located in the North Valley of Los Angeles were selected to participate in this study. Each participant was assigned a number to maintain confidentiality. The length of time for each participant in education was over 20 years. The number of years they have been in an administrative position ranged from eight to 17. Eight of the 10 participants are principals at Title I schools, and the percentage of emergent bilinguals at their school sites ranged from 2% to 80%.

Major Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the barriers exemplary principals have overcome to increase and sustain parent involvement at their school sites. Epstein's (2011) six types of involvement framework was used to obtain information on how these ten exemplary principals incorporate the six types of involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community to involve families at their school sites. The major findings of this study

were determined by considering the data collected through interviews, artifacts, observations, the review of the literature, and the central question.

The central research question asked, “What are the lived experiences of exemplary principals who have successful parent engagement at their school site?” I used Epstein’s (2011) six types of parent involvement framework to develop interview questions for this study.

Based on the findings and previous research, it was concluded that exemplary principals overcome barriers impeding parent participation at their school sites by making themselves present and incorporating all of Epstein’s (2011) six types of parent involvement throughout the school year. The findings are presented by the subquestions for each of the six types of Epstein’s parental involvement.

Major Finding 1

Interview Question 1 asked, “What have you done to provide parents with information and ideas to help their children at home?” The first major finding was that helping all families understand children and their needs helps them develop and establish routines to help their children and create a home conducive to learning.

The exemplary principals who took part in the study referenced parenting 36 times, or 13% of the total references of this study. Nine of the 10 exemplary principals expressed that providing families with parenting workshops allows the school to work with families to help their children at home. The exemplary principals provided examples of families’ needs. One way they support some families is by providing workshops that help parents with their child’s behavioral challenges at home. Parenting classes on this topic were offered to families. Seven of the 10 participants also shared that equipping

parents with tips and strategies to motivate their children at home has shown to be an essential piece of helping the families at their school sites. The participants shared phrases such as “providing various topics to be champion parents,” “know what your community needs and what they want to know,” and “we’ve also brought in fun ways that they can engage their children in reading.”

The findings in this study align with Epstein’s (2011) six types of parent involvement framework in that when schools care about their students, they demonstrate it by caring about the students families. When parents are involved, there is academic achievement (Baker et. al, 2016). The participants had a common theme with the families they support, working together. Students’ success can be linked to parental interest and support. Making connections with families allows families to be motivated to be active at their child’s school and be involved in the success of their child’s academic progress (Powers, 2016).

Major Finding 2

Interview Question 2 asked, “What methods of communication do you use to communicate with parents?” The second major finding was that communication with families allows parents to be informed of what is happening at the school site and provides them with opportunities to be involved.

According to Epstein (2011), Type 2 of involvement is communicating. This type yielded the highest number of references, 65, which was 23.6% of the total. All 10 participants agreed that communication is vital to building relationships with families and providing them with opportunities to be on-site. The participants described communication as important to parents’ participation at the school sites. Findings aligned

with Epstein's six types of parent involvement in that communicating with parents allows parents to understand what is happening at the school, monitor their children's progress, and build relationships with school staff.

The participants shared that they use various forms of communication to ensure all parents receive the information; not only do they use phone calls/text and social media but "we also catch parents at doors," they use parents to reach out to other parents, "every single Monday the room parents send out an email with everything that's going on that week at school", and one participant stated that sometimes "we flood them with things." The participants also stated that for communication to be effective, they must find translators as needed. They use staff and community members to assist: "I also ensure that our [school administrative assistant] translates it in Spanish," and "We have had to kind of create our own in-house translation unit working with our own moms and dads and community members to help support those families." The participants are dedicated to ensuring they use various modalities to communicate with families at events, workshops, and other opportunities to discuss student progress such as parent conferences or student success team meetings to communicate with parents.

Major Finding 3

Interview Question 3 asked, "What types of strategies are used to improve and maintain parent volunteers?" The third major finding was that providing multiple ways for parents to volunteer allows for more parents to be involved.

In Epstein's (2011) six types of parent involvement, Type 3 is volunteering. Volunteering yielded 41 frequencies, which was 14.9% of total references. When asked about encouraging parents to volunteer at their school sites, all 10 participants said they

start recruiting early. Nine of the 10 participants also stated that they assist parents with the volunteer process and application to ensure they complete it. They also mentioned they have to be flexible and accommodating to allow parents to be involved. One participant said, “Parents will say, well, can I come in after hours or early in the morning.” Another shared that “We’ll try to accommodate” and that they understand that they have to be “accommodating toward people’s schedules.” They understand that parents may not be able to volunteer but can always sign up and work during events. A participant stated, “We try to give multiple opportunities, and if there’s, I’ll say, ‘Oh, we need volunteers for our trunk or treat, we need volunteers for valet.’”

According to Baker et al. (2016), when schools do not accommodate schedules for parents to volunteer, it impacts the involvement of those parents who would otherwise volunteer. These 10 exemplary principals eliminated that barrier by being flexible and accommodating the needs of the parents within their communities. The findings also aligned with Epstein’s (2011) Type 3 of parent involvement in that when opportunities for parents to volunteer are created, the parents understand that they are welcomed and valued at their child’s school.

Major Finding 4

Interview Question 4 asked, “What types of workshops do you offer to your families?” The fourth major finding was that workshops are tailored to the specific needs of the parents to equip them with the tools needed to academically support their children at home.

Type 4 of parent involvement is learning at home. This type yielded 43 frequencies, which was 15.6% of the total references. The exemplary principals

referenced similar workshops as they need in Type 1 of involvement, parenting. However, they understood that this type was referencing workshops tailored to academics. Participants described the workshops as empowering parents and providing them with tools that parents may not necessarily have before attending the workshops. They also want to ensure the workshops are what parents need, so they provide them with surveys. The participants shared, “We give them a sheet, and they write the topics they want,” and also that “based on the surveys and based on our parents’ responses, we’ve done a lot on how to assist students with homework”; they want to make sure the workshops are productive and meaningful. One participant said, “We want to make sure we’re providing classes that will engage parents and be useful.”

Findings in this study align with Epstein’s (2011) six types of parent involvement in that principals must focus on helping parents know how to support, encourage, and help students at home each year. These exemplary principals have demonstrated doing this by using their staff to present multiple workshops in the areas of language arts, math, English learners, and science. One participant stated, “We use our coaches and they do all the academic and instructional pieces.” They have provided the parents with the strategies that give the parents the skills to support their children in the best way possible. The parents leave the classes feeling empowered and more ready to help their children. According to Lynch (2021), many times parents do not have the skills or resources to support their children at home. However, these exemplary principals have eliminated that barrier by empowering and equipping parents with the tools and resources necessary to help their children at home.

Major Finding 5

Interview Question 5 asked, “How do you involve families in the decision-making process of the school?” The fifth major finding was that exemplary principals have found that relationships entice parents to be involved in school committees.

Type 5 of parent involvement, decision making, yielded 44 frequencies, which was 15.9% of the total references. All 10 participants mentioned committee involvement as being a key type of involvement. All 10 exemplary principals shared that they have a school site council on their campus. Eight of the 10 have ELAC committees, and seven have a PTA.

Although not all parents can be part of these committees, these schools also have other committees such as safety and behavior committees. One participant shared, “We have parents that sit on our safety committee and they give input to the school and their voices are heard.” Many of the participants stated that they have built relationships with families, and this is one key way of recruiting the committee members. Participants shared many things they do to build positive relationships with the parents. One participant said, “I’m very transparent with our parents.” They also stated, “We hear the parents’ side, and we try to be in a happy medium.” They also shared that sometimes, parents do not want to commit because they may be intimidated by the process. They use their relationships to reach out: “If we don’t get responses, then we start doing phone calls, people who might have been on a committee before,” or “I approach them gently about joining one of our committees, visibility is a huge thing for not only for them to see me, but for me to see them.” They also provide training for them to reduce the fear parents may have. According to the family engagement framework (CDE, 2023),

principals should train families to allow them to learn about the process, policies, and budgetary items. This would allow parents to be less nervous when participating in the decision-making process.

Ensuring parents know their voice and vote is important has helped with the relationship between principals and parents. This aligns with Epstein's (2011) six types of parent involvement in that parents are aware that their voices are part of the school decision-making process, and they are also aware of school, district, and state policies. These principals have eliminated any barriers that impede parents from being part of the decision-making process of their school sites.

Major Finding 6

Interview Question 6 asked, "What amount of time do you spend collaborating with families within in the community?" The sixth major finding was that exemplary principals understand that collaborating with the community is an ongoing process.

The sixth type of parent involvement is collaborating with the community. Collaborating with the community received 43 frequencies, which was 17% of the total references. All participants mentioned that they could not give a specific amount of time they spent collaborating with the community. They all shared that much of their time is spent building relationships and cultivating partnerships. The participants shared how they make themselves visible for the community. One participant shared, "I've had parents come and say, 'Oh, it's so good to see you out there in the morning, so good to see you all in the afternoon.'" They described that reaching out to the community provides resources for their school. One participant stated, "Parents begin to realize that the community is there also to offer help."

The findings align with Epstein's (2011) six types of parent involvement in that in working with the community, the goal is for families to be able to collaborate with other parents and also to have awareness of the resources offered in the community. These exemplary principals have been able to provide these opportunities for their families. They have made connections with local law enforcement, local public librarians, parks and recreation, and retail shops that provide services and resources for families. According to MacPhee (2021), when schools provide resources and opportunities for parent involvement, they decrease barriers that have impeded their participation in the past. These principals have spent hours of their time, including before and after school hours and also weekends, to connect and build relationships with community members to ensure the families at their schools benefit from these resources.

Unexpected Findings

Two unexpected findings were identified in this study. The first was the connections between Type 1, parenting, and Type 4, learning at home, of the six types of parent involvement. The second unexpected finding was that these exemplary principals shared that they needed to be present and collaborate with the community for hours. They put in countless hours to provide resources for their school and families.

The first unexpected finding was that these principals seek a plethora of themes to share with their parents. They provide parenting and academic workshops for these families at any opportunity they have. They use the experts at their schools to provide these workshops but also reach out to professionals in the industry to provide parent workshop series. They understand the importance of educating the families and using their budget toward these workshops. They tailor to the needs of the families by ensuring

the topics they bring to the school provide the families with the skills and resources they need. Buddy (2012) shared in their research that at times, aligning workshops can be difficult for schools because many do not understand their community. These 10 exemplary principals demonstrated that they understand what their parents need. Research also shows that when parents are provided with opportunities to attend workshops, they become more involved in the school community (Nokali & Bachman, 2010). Whether that includes using the staff at their school sites or paying outside professionals, the goal of involving families to participate in these workshops has been successful for these exemplary principals.

The second unexpected finding was listening to these 10 exemplary principals share how they spend their time collaborating with the community. The participants shared that they could not put an exact time that they spent collaborating with families and the community. The participants shared how spending these hours before school, after school, on weekends, and late at night pays off because they built relationships with many individuals. The exemplary principals took pride in sharing that they do not mind spending their time building these partnerships and relationships. One might expect the participants to complain about the number of hours they put into collaborating with the community, but instead, they told stories of triumph and unity in their communities. According to Sanders (2008), when principals have effective partnerships with their school community, they create an environment in which the success of the students is supported and encouraged by all.

Conclusions

The findings of this study and review of the literature yielded the following conclusions describing how exemplary principals have overcome barriers to increase and sustain parent involvement at their school sites using Epstein's (2011) six types of parent involvement. According to Patte (2002), providing opportunities for parents to be involved, communicating and sharing resources for parents, and involving them in all aspects of the school increase parent involvement both at home and school. The first two conclusions focus on providing parents with opportunities to be involved at the school site via workshops and volunteering opportunities. The last three conclusions focus on building a community that includes fostering relationships and partnerships with parents and the school community.

Conclusion 1: Providing Effective Workshops for Parents

Based on the findings of this study and supporting literature, I conclude that providing effective workshops for parents creates a sense of empowerment among parents and allows them to feel more prepared to help their children at home. These exemplary principals described the importance of providing parents with opportunities to learn the curriculum and skills their children learn at school. They believe in the importance of ensuring parents are involved and become partners in their children's education (Bryk et al., 2010). They often use their staff to provide workshops for parents; these are more academically based because they are familiar with the school's curriculum and goals. According to C. Brown and Militello (2016), parents attend events that they know will provide them with skills they are looking for to be able to help with their child's education. They also provide workshops for parents to learn tools and strategies

and how to help themselves, which is essential for supporting their children at home (Wilder, 2014). The 10 exemplary principals know that parent participation in their children's educational process is critical to their children's academic success.

Conclusion 2: Providing Parents with Opportunities to Volunteer

Based on the findings of this study and supporting literature, I conclude that providing opportunities for parents to volunteer allows parents to feel welcome and that their involvement at the school site is valuable. These exemplary principals found various ways to recruit and facilitate volunteer opportunities at their school sites. They are flexible with the times and ways parents volunteer. According to Lindberg (2014), if schools provide varied opportunities, more parents are able to be involved. The volunteer opportunities that these principals provide allow parents to be involved in activities that support and increase learning (Patte, 2002). These principals have opened their parent centers beyond the school day. They offered parents opportunities to volunteer their time at after-school activities or from home by cutting or creating packets for teachers. This aligns with Epstein's (2011) six types of parent involvement in allowing parents to volunteer even if it is not done at school. Anicama et al. (2018) found that barriers to participation by parents' decrease or are eliminated when various opportunities are created for parents to volunteer. It is key to change how opportunities are provided for parents to meet their needs.

Conclusion 3: Being Visible to the School Community

Based on the findings of this study and supporting literature, I conclude that being visible to the school community increases the likelihood that parents will be involved and feel welcome at schools. A barrier that is often found is that parents do not feel welcome

or are intimidated by school personnel (Lawson, 2018). Allowing families to see the principal in the morning or in the afternoon at meetings reduces the unwelcoming feeling. They get to know the principal and trust them. Being visible is an effective way to build relationships and trust with parents. The exemplary principals all ensure they are visible with the events that occur on campus and off campus. They want to be able to be approachable with parents and the school community. As Hornby (2011) found in their research, parents want to know that they are important, and it is the job of these principals to make the parents feel they are key in the education of their children. Being visible and greeting their families at the school site shows them the principals value their presence.

Conclusion 4: Building Relationships to Encourage Parents in Participating in the Decision-Making Process

Based on the findings of this study and supporting literature, I conclude that these principals have found that the relationships they have developed with the parents at their schools have influenced parents to become part of the decision-making process at school. According to Dixon (2018), parents become involved at the school site when they feel welcome and valued. These principals have become partners with the parents, and together they share a common goal of making the best decisions to improve the academic success of their students (Street, 2009). Many of the principals shared how some parents were intimidated by not knowing the process or understanding how to read the budget forms. These principals took this as an opportunity to provide workshops and classes to teach them about the committees and process. This aligns with the family engagement framework that states principals should provide ways to train families to familiarize themselves and understand budgetary items, policies, and their roles (CDE, 2023). In

doing so, they have empowered their parents to be active committee members and strengthened their relationships and trust.

Conclusion 5: The Job of a Principal is Ongoing and Collaboration With Community is Key

Based on the findings of this study and supporting literature, I conclude that exemplary principals understand that their job is ongoing and collaboration with the community is key. The exemplary principals have created partnerships within the community that provide resources for families that may not be found at their schools (Epstein, 2018). By making these connections, principals strengthen the relationships between the school, parents, and community (Georgis et al., 2014). The PIQE (2023) framework stated that principals should support a partnership between the community and school. These partnerships take time and effort, but once they have been established, they become great resources for parents. This provides multiple opportunities for parents to be involved.

Implications for Action

It is concluded that exemplary elementary principals who have overcome barriers to increase and sustain parent involvement at their school sites include Epstein's (2011) six types of parent involvement. The following implications for action address the conclusions derived from the study and the need for exemplary principals to continue to overcome barriers that impede parent involvement by using the six types of parent involvement, which include parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community.

Implication for Action 1: Family and Parent Centers Should Create Partnerships to Provide Targeted Parenting Classes

Schools currently provide classes for parents using their staff to support families. Schools have staff who present classes using their expertise; however, classes that are specific to certain skills should be brought into the schools. Although some schools have money to pay for outside agencies to provide parenting classes for their families, it would be beneficial for all schools to have the same opportunities. Classes such as English as a second language, computation, and health classes can be taught at schools when partnering with outside agencies. Programs such as the one PIQE offers, which is a 9-week series that helps educate parents on how to foster a positive educational environment for children, can support all families. Districts should have partnerships with agencies that provide classes the schools are unable to provide to support the families.

Implication for Action 2: Effective Communication Ensures Parents Receive Accessible Information

Effective, linguistically accessible communication with parents allows the principal to have a positive and trusting relationship with parents. It is important that principals know their school's population and put systems in place to communicate with parents in their native language. Currently, many schools have systems they use to provide important information to parents via email, calls, and text. They also communicate in the parents' home language. By providing communication in the home language, parents can understand what is occurring at the school sites and are more willing to participate. As schools continue to enroll students from various parts of the

world, finding translation in those languages is vital. Effective communication with the entire school community is essential to successful principals.

Implication for Action 3: Recruiting and Maintaining Volunteers

One form of parent involvement at school sites is engaging parent volunteers. School volunteers often support with many tasks that help the school function more smoothly. Volunteers become an integral part of the school community as they support the various events and needs of the school (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Research has shown that often parents may want to volunteer, but because of barriers like work or other commitments, some cannot volunteer during the day. Principals should provide alternative ways for parents to have access to volunteer opportunities (Gross et al., 2020). Although they may be busy during the day, many parents can volunteer during evening events, on weekend events, and at home. Research supports thinking out of the box and creating volunteer opportunities that fit the needs of the community.

Implication for Action 4: Providing Academically Related Workshops for Parents

Parent centers are key to support principals in providing academically related workshops for parents (CDE, 2023). Schools offer various workshops for parents throughout the school year. However, providing academically related workshops for parents is key to help them support their children's learning at home. As the curriculum continues to change, principals can use their teachers to provide workshops for parents that will equip parents with tools on how to stay current and support their children's learning at home. It would be beneficial for schools to provide parents with workshops that are grade-level specific to prepare parents to support their children at the different stages of their education. Principals, teachers, and staff members can support these

workshops and make connections with the parents as they empower them (Poza et al., 2014).

Implication for Action 5: Preparing Parents to be Part of the Decision-Making Process

As principals seek to involve parents in the decision-making process, it is vital for schools to teach parents about what their participation in the decision-making committee entails. In various research studies, parents often share that they are intimidated by not knowing the process (M. Lim, 2012). However, when parents feel welcome and have a voice in the decision-making process, they become active partners with the principal and other educational partners (Paulynice, 2020). As principals plan their workshops for the year, they should incorporate workshops for parents on what being on a committee entails and the benefits of involvement.

Implication for Action 6: Collaborating With the Community to Provide Resources for Families

One important responsibility of a principal is collaborating with the community to bring resources to the school. It is beneficial for principals to connect with the community and bring in the available resources to the school. Some of the community resources that can be brought into the schools are partnerships with local parks, churches, clinics, and stores. Community partnerships can help the principal foster cultural awareness and appreciate the diversity within their schools. In these partnerships, students who lack resources can be provided with the resources they need that the school may not be able to provide (Broome, 2018). In a world where there is so much diversity

in the schools, a partnership between the schools, families, and the community help create a positive school culture.

Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to identify the barriers exemplary elementary principals encountered as they sought to improve parent engagement at their school sites. A secondary purpose of this study was to identify and describe the strategies they used to overcome the identified barriers to implement and maintain successful parent engagement at their school sites. Additionally, I present the following recommendations as areas meriting further study.

Recommendation 1: Research on Free Series of Parenting Classes

Some schools located in better socioeconomic neighborhoods were able to fundraise and pay for a series of parenting classes. It is recommended that future researchers reach out to various districts and examine what partnerships they have established within the community that can provide a series of parenting classes free of cost for Title I schools.

Recommendation 2: Research on Translation Methods in All Languages

There is currently an influx of migrant students to schools. The families who are part of the schools now come from all over the world, and finding translators for these diverse newcomers has become a bit more difficult for schools. Future research should be studied to determine the most effective ways to communicate with parents who do not speak English and also speak a foreign language that is not often found in the translation database for the district. Future research should also study how schools are effectively communicating with parents when multiple languages are required.

Recommendation 3: Research on Effective Ways to Recruit Volunteers

During this study, parent volunteers were not interviewed. The strategies principals use to retain and maintain volunteers were studied. Future research should be conducted asking parents what entices them to be volunteers and keep coming back to the school to help. Conducting qualitative research and inviting current volunteers to participate in the study could allow future researchers to learn more about what can be done to increase parent volunteers at school sites.

Recommendation 4: Research on Academic Workshops

The findings of this study suggest that exemplary principals effectively use the expertise of their staff to provide academic workshops for parents. It is unclear whether the workshops provided are enough to prepare parents to support children at home. Future research could be conducted on the chosen topics and how supported and ready parents feel to help their children academically.

Recommendation 5: Research on Family Input in Decision-Making at School

Research has suggested that the more families are involved in the decision-making process, the more students' academic outcomes increase. That is why it is crucial that parents provide input in the decision making at schools because they know their children best. It is recommended that further studies be conducted on how parents are educated on the various committees at each school site. Researchers should reach out to the different districts to compare the differences between their parent engagement units.

Recommendation 6: Research on the Impact of Collaborating with the Community

Findings in this study suggest that exemplary principals understand the importance of collaborating with the community. They shared their understanding that

investing time is crucial for these partnerships to be successful. It is recommended that further study be done on how principals can also collaborate with the community but also be able to manage their time and practice self-care. It is important for principals to find a balance so that they do not burn out with the number of hours it takes to collaborate with the community.

Concluding Remarks and Reflections

Research on parent involvement has been ongoing for many years. How parent involvement impacts the education of a child has been of interest to other researchers. According to Walker (2016), schools continue to find ways to bring in parents as active participants at school. It has been studied and found that parent involvement improves the outcome for students (Sakamoto, 2021). It is also known through research that there are many barriers that impact parents' involvement (Baker et. al., 2016). Many parents who may want to be involved simply cannot because of other commitments.

Therefore, this study has been an important way to capture the lived experience of principals who have been able to overcome barriers and have sustained parent involvement at their school sites. I listened to the stories of 10 exemplary principals who use various strategies and have overcome the barriers that impact the parents in their community from being involved. In sharing their lived experiences, they hope to inspire other elementary principals to implement their strategies at their school sites to increase parent involvement. The findings of this study can also help districts and county education offices to enhance their parent engagement programs to support school principals and parents. The results can also be instrumental for educational partners to develop programs designed to empower parents.

In conducting research on exemplary principals who have overcome barriers to increase and sustain parent involvement at their school, I found that maintaining active involvement takes time and planning by the principal. It is not something that happens overnight as shared by the participants who were part of the study. They have put time and effort into building relationships with the parents and continually aim to better meet the needs of the families. Baker et al. (2016) and Hernandez (2010) found that unwelcoming schools were one of the barriers that families often conveyed as being part of them not being involved. The principals in this study took pride in having welcoming schools and parent centers for their parents.

The interviews conducted were guided by Epstein's (2011) framework of six types of parent involvement. The participants shared strategies they use in all of the six types of parent involvement, which are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. The participants made it clear that they use varied ways to involve parents and know that family dynamics have changed and, therefore, it is important that they change the ways things have been done in the past. This aligns with Kelty and Wakabayashi's (2020) study in which principals cannot continue to create opportunities in the same way they did before. The principals shared their thoughts about the families and their current needs to involve them at the school sites.

One of the reasons this study was important to me was that when I first became a principal, I was excited about meeting the parents. My first year as principal was during the COVID-19 pandemic. I was excited to meet the families although I was going to meet the parents through Zoom. As an excited first-year principal, I asked the school district

whether they could increase the allotted attendees to 300 participants because the school had over 600 students enrolled in the school. To my surprise, only two parents attended. As the schools began to open, I expected the number of parents to join and participate in the workshops to grow; however, I consistently had about six parents attending. Parent involvement became an area of focus for me and I made it a focus for my school. At the start of the dissertation process, I began implementing various ways to invite families to participate, and little by little, the number of parents attending workshops began to increase. However, I wanted to meet principals who had ongoing and high numbers of parents involved at their schools. As a fellow principal, I was able to learn a lot from each of the participants. Using Epstein's (2011) six types of parent involvement allowed me to compare what I do specifically at my school site and what can be improved. The exemplary principals interviewed filled me with pride in that none of them resented their principalship job despite everything it entails.

I connected with the participants and agreed that to have a welcoming environment, principals must be present and make connections with the families. The exemplary principals who participated in the study were present and active participants in all activities happening at the school regardless of when the activities take place. This allows them to have positive relationships with parents. I was able to take time to reflect on the actions of these exemplary principals. I also understood that there may be barriers that impede some parents from being able to be involved during school hours. However, I learned from the participants that principals can provide different opportunities for those who want to help from home, at evening events, and weekend events. The hope for this

research is that it will provide ideas for principals who also struggle to increase and maintain parental involvement.

Although parent involvement may not be at the level one expects, implementing the strategies these exemplary principals shared can be the beginning of better involvement at a school site. Parents will come and be involved if principals continue to be visible and provide welcoming environments. It is my experience that oftentimes parents feel unwanted or not respected because of language barriers and cultural differences. However, creating a culture in which everyone is valued and respected will allow parents to feel needed and an important part of the school community. I can relate to those parents who feel intimidated about coming into the school site. I am a Latina woman working in a predominantly Latino community. I grew up in a community similar to the one where I am a principal. I can relate to the families and find ways to connect with them. My parents and the parents of my friends often could not attend events because they were working during the day, but they were able to attend the evening events and parent conferences. Just like the families in my school community, evening events are more attended than morning events, and this has been a reason my school offers events at nighttime. I often share my story with the parents and how my own parents provided me with support at home in my native language of Spanish, and that motivated me to do well at school. I want the parents to understand that their involvement in any way is good for their children. I have been able to reach out to the parents in the community and let them know that they are needed and are an important part of the school's goal and mission. Together, parents, principals, and the community can ensure students can reach their best potential for success.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Synthesis Matrix

Author	Parent Engagement/ Parent participation/ parent involvement	Barriers and Parents	Parents and school communication	Parent Involvement and positive outcomes in education/student success	building community and family	Teacher/ Administrator Perceptions	Modeling Theory	Social Theory	Parent Development Theory	Cognitive Theory	parents at school	Parent partnerships	Framework/ parenting	Framework/ communicating	Framework/ volunteering	Framework/ learning at home	Framework/ decision making	Framework/ Collaborating with the community	Methodology
Anicama et al., (2016)	X	X														X			
Baker, T. L., Wise, J., Kelley, G., & Skiba, R. J. (2016)	X	X		X	X						X	X		X			X		
Bower & Griffin (2011)	X										X		X	X	X	X	X	X	
Brooks (2007)	X					X					X	X							
Broome, C.J. (2008)	X	X	X			X							X	X	X		X		
Brown (2016)	X					X					X	X							
Buddy, L.C. (2012)	X	X	X			X													
Byrk et al (2010)	X		X		X							X						X	
Cheong (2019)	X		X	X															
Cherry (2021)							X												
Cheung & Pomerantz (2012)	X			X							X	X							
Cox (2005)	X		X		X							X							
Creswell (2014)																			X
Creswell & Poth (2013)																			X
Crew (2007)	X	X				X					X	X							
Denese et al., (2007)	X	X				X													
Dixon (2008)	X				X						X	X					X		
Domina (2005)	X		X	X	X						X	X							
Epstein, J. L (1997)	X		X	X	X						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Epstein, J. L (2001)	X		X	X	X							X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Epstein, J. L (2007)	X		X	X	X							X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Epstein, J. L (2011)	X		X	X	X							X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Epstein, J. L (2018)	X		X	X	X							X	X	X	X	X	X	X	

Epstein, J. L (2019)	X		X	X	X							X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Eun (2018)							X											
Ferguson (2005)	X	X																
Fernandez et al (2015)							X											
Fitriani, S., & Istaryatiningtias (2020)	X		X	X	X					X	X						X	X
Galindo & Sheldon (2012)	X			X	X					X	X	X						
Georgis, R., Gokiart, R. J., Ford, D. M., & Ali, M. (2014).	X			X						X	X		X					
Gross, D., Bettencourt, A. F., Taylor, K., Francis, L., Bower, K., & Singleton, D. L. (2020).	X		X	X								X				X		X
Grusec (1992)							X											
Hakvoort, I. (2002)	X						X	X	X		X							
Hart, C. (2022)	X			X							X							
Heilig (2023)	X				X	X												
Hernandez, M. (2010).		X			X					X						X		X
Hillier, C. (2021).	X			X												X		
Hornby (2011)			X	X	X													
Horvart et al (2010)	X	X					X											
Ishimaru (2014)	X				X					X	X							
Jacques & Villegas, (2018).	X		X		X				X	X								
Jeynes (2018)	X				X					X	X							
Jung, A. W. (2011)	X		X	X		X				X			X	X			X	
Kelty, E. N., & Wakabayashi, T.	X			X	X	X				X					X		X	X
King-Yin Wong, K. (2015).	X	X	X															
Lawson, D. C. (2018).	X			X	X							X				X		X
Lemmer, E. (2011)	X					X			X									
Lim (2012)	X	X		X														
Lim.L. & Renshaw, P. (2001)	X								X									
Lindberg, E. N. (2014).	X			X													X	X
Lombardt (2004)																		X
Lynch, J. (2021).	X					X				X	X						X	X
MacPhee, M. (2021).	X	X	X											X			X	
Manaday (2014)	X									X	X	X						
Mapp & Kuttner (2013)	X		X															
Mass & Nijnatten (2005)	X							X										X
Massuco (2020)	X	X			X													X

McDowall, P.S. & Schaugency.E (2017)	X		X			X										X		X	
McMillan, J. & Schumacher, S. (2010)																			X
Mehra (2002)																			X
Miller, R. (2011)	X						X			X									
Mowder (1997)	X							X		X									X
Mowder (2005)	X							X		X									X
Mowder (2006)	X							X		X									X
Mowder & Sanders (2007)	X							X		X									X
Muzvidziwa (2017)	X		X	X						X									
Nardo, A. (2021)	X						X			X									
Newman et al. (2019)	X	X								X									
Nokali & Bachman (2010)	X	X								X	X								
Ogg, J., Clark, K., Strissel, D., & Rogers, M. (2021).	X			X	X								X	X					
Okeke (2014)	X									X									
Park & Holloway (2017)	X									X								X	
Patte (2002)	X	X	X																
Patten, M.L., Newhart, M.(2018)																			X
Patton, M.Q. (2015)																			X
Patton, M.Q. (2019)																		X	
Paulynice (2020)	X		X															X	
Pena (2002)	X	X																	
Pomerantz, E. M., Moorman, E. A., & Litwack, S. D. (2007).	X			X						X	X	X							X
Powell & Kalina (2009)							X												
Power, J. (2016).	X	X	X		X											X	X		
Poza et al., (2014)	X		X	X	X					X	X								
Rapp & Duncan (2012)			X	X															
Reece et al. (2013)	X			X	X														
Roberts & Hyatt (2019)																			X
Robinson & Harris, 2015	X	X								X									
Rogers et al (2000)	X		X		X					X									
Ryan, C. S., Casas, J. F., Kelly-Vance, L., Ryalls, B. O., & Nero, C. (2010).	X			X							X		X	X	X				
Sagor (2005)	X	X																	

Sakamoto, J. (2021).	X			X															
Salkind & Frey 2020		X																	X
Sanders (2008)			X	X						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Sheldon, S.B., & Epstein, J.L. (2007)	X			X	X						X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Shiffman, C.D. (2013)	X	X		X	X														
Skar et al (2022)			X	X	X														
Somariah (2020)				X	X	X			X	X									
Spryropolou & Koutroukis (2021)		X	X																
Standefer (2006)	X																		
Stefanski et al. (2016)	X		X										X						
Street (2009)	X				X					X								X	
Tekin, A.K. (2011)	X						X	X										X	
Thaman,(1998)	X																	X	
Turney and Kao (2009)		X								X									
Vellymalay (2012)	X	X			X														
Vygotsky, 1962							X												
Wadsworth (2004)								X											
Walker, J. M. T. (2011)	X	X		X	X							X	X					X	
Walker, J. M. T. (2016).	X	X			X							X	X						X
White (2022)					X	X													
Wilder, S. (2014).	X			X															
Woolfolk (2004)							X												
Worthy and Hoffman (1999)	X									X				X					
Yaghoubi, M., & Farrokh. P. (2022)	X						X	X											
Yongtao, G., & Bilige, S. (2019)	X		X	X						X									
Yulianti (2019)	X	X		X	X														

APPENDIX B

Invitation Letter to Participants

Dear PARTICIPANT,

I am conducting a research study on principals who have overcome barriers at the school site that impede parent involvement. The purpose of the research is to identify the strategies exemplary principals have used to overcome the barriers and what principals have done to sustain parent involvement at their school sites. Participating in this research will involve you in participating in an interview via Zoom that will take approximately one hour to complete. There are no known risks for this study and participation is entirely voluntary. Please let me know if you would be interested in participating.

For more information, or to sign up, email me at XXXXXXXXX@mail.umassglobal.edu or call me at XXX-XXX-XXXX. I am looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Thank you,

Sandra Quintanilla

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol

Q. 1 How many years have you been the principal at your school site? Do you believe this to be a factor into the success of your parent engagement?

Q. 2 What barriers have you encountered with providing parent engagement opportunities at your school site?

Q. 3 What recommendations do you give to a new principal who is trying to increase parent engagement at their school site?

Q.4 What events do you host at your school to invite families? Is there a specific event in which you notice more parent participation?

Q. 5 What incentives or special features have you added to parent events to encourage parents to attend? (Examples: Providing food, child care, drawings for prizes, etc)

The next set of questions will focus on Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement.

Epstein's TYPE 1: Parenting: Helping all families understand child and adolescent development and establishing home environments that support children as students.

Q.1 What have you done to provide parents with information and ideas to help their children at home?

Q. 2 How often do you provide this information and ideas to parents?

TYPE 2: Communicating: Designing and conducting effective forms of two-way communications school programs and children's progress.

Q.1 What methods of communication do you use to communicate with

parents? Q.2 What member of your team serves in the role of parent

outreach? Is this a paid position or voluntary?

TYPE 3: Volunteering: Recruiting and organizing help at school to support the school and student activities.

Q. 1 What types of strategies are used to improve and maintain parent volunteers?

Q. 2 How do you use parent volunteers to recruit other parents to become involved at the school site?

TYPE 4: Learning at home: Providing information and ideas to families about how to help students with homework and curriculum-related activities and decisions.

Q. 1 What types of workshops do you offer to your families?

Q. 2 What is your goal in these workshops? For example, parent participation, education, empowerment or something else?"

TYPE 5: Decision-making: Having parents from all backgrounds serve as representatives and leaders on school committees and, with their leadership, obtaining input from parents on school decisions.

Q.1 How do you involve families in the decision making process of the school? Q.

2 What systems do you have in place to invite parents to join the various committees?

TYPE 6: Collaborating with the community: Identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to strengthen and support schools, students and families, and organizing activities that benefit the community and increase student learning opportunities.

Q.1 What amount of time do you spend collaborating with families within the community? Does the dynamic change when outreach is done?

Q.2 How much of your time is dedicated to planning these events?

APPENDIX D

Alignment Table

Table 1: Alignment of Research Questions to Exemplary Principals Overcoming Barriers to Increase Parent Involvement

Research Question	Interview Question	Epstein’s Six Types of Parent Involvement
What strategies do exemplary elementary principals use to overcome the identified barriers to implement and maintain successful parent engagement at their school sites?	<p>Q.1 What have you done to provide parents with information and ideas to help their children at home?</p> <p>Q. 2 How often do you provide this information and ideas to parents?</p>	<p>TYPE 1: Parenting</p> <p>Helping all families understand child and adolescent development and establishing home environments that support children as students.</p>
2. What strategies do exemplary elementary principals use to overcome the identified barriers to implement and maintain successful parent engagement at their school sites?	<p>Q.1 What methods of communication do you use to communicate with parents?</p> <p>Q.2 What member of your team serves in the role of parent outreach? Is this a paid position or voluntary?</p>	<p>TYPE 2: Communicating</p> <p>Designing and conducting effective forms of two-way communications school programs and children's progress.</p>
What strategies do exemplary elementary principals use to overcome the identified barriers to implement and maintain successful parent engagement at their school sites?	<p>Q. 1 What types of strategies are used to improve and maintain parent volunteers?</p> <p>Q. 2 How do you use parent volunteers to recruit other parents to become involved at the school site?</p>	<p>TYPE 3: Volunteering</p> <p>Recruiting and organizing help at school to support the school and student activities.</p>

<p>What strategies do exemplary elementary principals use to overcome the identified barriers to implement and maintain successful parent engagement at their school sites?</p>	<p>Q. 1 What types of workshops do you offer to your families?</p> <p>Q. 2 What is your goal in these workshops? For example, parent participation, education, empowerment or something else?</p>	<p>TYPE 4: Learning at home</p> <p>Providing information and ideas to families about how to help students with homework and curriculum-related activities and decisions.</p>
<p>What strategies do exemplary elementary principals use to overcome the identified barriers to implement and maintain successful parent engagement at their school sites?</p>	<p>Q.1 How do you involve families in the decision making process of the school?</p> <p>Q. 2 What systems do you have in place to invite parents to join the various committees?</p>	<p>TYPE 5: Decision-making</p> <p>Having parents from all backgrounds serve as representatives and leaders on school committees and, with their leadership, obtaining input from parents on school decisions.</p>
<p>What strategies do exemplary elementary principals use to overcome the identified barriers to implement and maintain successful parent engagement at their school sites?</p>	<p>Q.1 What amount of time do you spend collaborating with families within the community? Does the dynamic change when outreach is done?</p> <p>Q.2 How much of your time is dedicated to planning these events?</p>	<p>TYPE 6: Collaborating with the community</p> <p>Identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to strengthen and support schools, students and families, and organizing activities that benefit the community and increase student learning opportunities.</p>

APPENDIX E

Interview Observation Feedback Form

Dissertation Pilot Interview (October, 2023)

Interview Observer Feedback Reflection Questions

Conducting interviews is a learned skill set/experience. Gaining valuable insight about your interview skills and affect with the interview will support your data gathering when interviewing the actual participants. As the researcher you should reflect on the questions below after completing the interview. You should also discuss the following reflection questions with your 'observer' after completing the interview field test. The questions are written from your perspective as the interviewer. Provide your observer with a copy of these reflective questions prior to the field test interview. Then you can verbalize your thoughts with the observer and they can add valuable insight from their observation. After completing this process you may have edits or changes to recommend for the interview protocol before finalizing.

1. How long did the interview take? Did the time seem to be appropriate?
2. Were the questions clear or were there places when the interviewee was unclear?
3. Were there any words or terms used during the interview that were unclear or confusing?
4. How did you feel during the interview? Comfortable? Nervous? For the observer: how did you perceive the interviewer in regards to the preceding descriptors?
5. Did you feel prepared to conduct the interview? Is there something you could have done to be better prepared? For the observer: how did you perceive the interviewer in regards to the preceding descriptors?
6. What parts of the interview went the most smoothly and why do you think that was the case?
7. Are there parts of the interview that seemed to be awkward and why do you think that was the case?
8. If you were to change any part of the interview, what would it be and how would you change it?
9. What suggestions do you have for improving the overall process?

APPENDIX F

Institutional Review Board Approval

From: **Institutional Review Board** <my@umassglobal.edu>

Date: Fri, Dec 8, 2023 at 7:59 AM

Subject: IRB Application Approved: Sandra Quintanilla

To: <XXXXXXXXX@mail.umassglobal.edu>

Cc: <XXXXXX@umassglobal.edu>, <XXXXXXXX@umassglobal.edu>,
<irb@umassglobal.edu>

Dear Sandra Quintanilla,

Congratulations! Your IRB application to conduct research has been approved by the UMass Global Institutional Review Board. Please keep this email for your records, as it will need to be included in your research appendix.

If you need to modify your IRB application for any reason, please fill out the "Application Modification Form" before proceeding with your research. The Modification form can be found at IRB.umassglobal.edu

Best wishes for a successful completion of your study.

Thank You,

IRB
Academic Affairs
UMass Global
16355 Laguna Canyon Road
Irvine, CA 92618
irb@umassglobal.edu
www.umassglobal.edu

This email is an automated notification. If you have questions please email us at irb@umassglobal.edu.

APPENDIX G

Informed Consent Form

INFORMATION ABOUT: Barriers Exemplary Principals Have Overcome to Increase Parent Participation at the School Site

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Sandra Quintanilla, M.Ed.

PURPOSE OF STUDY: You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by *Sandra Quintanilla, a doctoral student from the Doctoral of Education in Organizational Leadership at UMass Global*. This phenomenological study explores the barriers exemplary principals have overcome to increase parent participation at their school sites and the strategies they have used to maintain and sustain parent involvement.

By participating in this study, I agree to participate in an interview. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes and will be conducted over 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.
- b) I understand that the interview will be recorded. The recordings will be available only to the researcher and the professional transcriptionist. The 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 will be destroyed. All other data and consents will be securely stored for three years after completion of data collection and confidentially shredded or fully deleted.
- c) The possible benefit of this study to me is that this study will provide information on how principals can overcome barriers that impede parents from being actively involved in their child's education by being engaged and involved at their child's school site. This will help principals with having strategies that have been found to help increase and sustain parental involvement at the school sites.
- d) If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Sandra Quintanilla at squintan@mail.umassglobal.edu or by phone at 818 404-XXXX; or Dissertation Chair, Dr. Linda Kimble at lindakkimble@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 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 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, UMass Global, 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 Rights.” I have read the above and understand it and hereby consent to the procedure(s) set forth.

Signature of Participant _____

Signature of Principal Investigator _____

Date _____

APPENDIX H

Exemplary Principal Rubric

**Exemplary Principal
Parent Involvement at School Site Rubric**

Please select developing, building, or sustaining for each description.

Description	Developing	Building	Sustaining
Establish a welcoming environment for family participation	The families visit the school and are welcomed as they enter the office.	The school is welcoming to families and community members. The school offers opportunities for families to be involved.	The school is a welcoming place where all families are greeted as they enter the campus. The school has a family center that is open at all times. Parent workshops are offered throughout the month. Information is provided in various languages.
The school offers parent education classes	The school shares the importance of families and teachers working together to support student learning.	The school offers parent education classes for parents. The classes are offered to parents during the school day.	The school offers parent education classes led by school staff and community members. The classes are tailored to support student learning at school and home. Parents are provided with strategies to build on parents' capacity to support learning at home.
The school communicates with families in various ways	The school keeps families informed of upcoming events using flyers and electronic notices in the languages spoken.	School staff develop connections with families through multiple two-way communication tools, including personal calls, e-mails and notes.	The school communicates in numerous interactive ways, both formally and informally. Using automated phone calls, emails, flyers, use of social media, and personal invitation to events.
The school ensures families have access to school leaders	Parents need to make an appointment in order to talk to the school principal.	School leaders are visible to families. They greet families at the gates at drop-off and pick-up.	School leaders are visible to families. They greet families at drop-off/pick-up. They meet regularly with families, in small groups, or individually. The principal and leaders

			provide families with different contact options.
The school removes barriers to family participation	The leaders meet with families to learn what would help them with their child's learning and what barriers are impeding them from being involved in school.	The leaders survey the families to learn about their child's needs, and meet with families to discuss their interest in workshops. They learn about the barriers impacting their involvement.	The leaders survey families, meet with families, and have assigned staff members to personally connect with families to determine their interest and support needed to reduce barriers impacting their involvement in schools. The leaders review the systems in place to ensure barriers are eliminated.

APPENDIX I

UMass Global Research Participant's Bill of Rights



UMASS GLOBAL 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 UMASS GLOBAL Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The UMass Global 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, UMASS GLOBAL, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.

APPENDIX J

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative Certification



Completion Date 22-May-2022
Expiration Date N/A
Record ID 48988219

This is to certify that:

Sandra Quintanilla

Has completed the following Citi Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

Human Subjects Research
(Curriculum Group)
Social-Behavioral-Educational Researchers
(Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

University of Massachusetts Global



Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w8b5e82e3-6cc0-42a1-90c0-7417b90c0f29-48988219