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Establishing Effective Home-School Partnerships by Building Capacity

JaNiece M. Terry
National Louis University

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ESTABLISHING EFFECTIVE HOME-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS BY BUILDING
CAPACITY

BY

JANIECE M. TERRY

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SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT

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JaNiece M. Terry
Integrated Doctoral Program: Reading and Language

Approved:

Chair/Co-Chair, Dissertation Committee

Program Director

Co-Chair/Member, Dissertation Committee

Director, Doctoral Programs

Member, Dissertation Committee

Dean, National College of Education

Dean's Representative

Date Approved

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ABSTRACT

Decades of research on parental involvement strongly suggests that students, of all ages and from all backgrounds, are most successful when they have supportive and actively engaged families. However, many educators leave preparation programs with little or no content relating to family and community relations, and therefore, lack the necessary knowledge, skills, and sometimes belief systems to successfully establish effective home-school partnerships that lead to increased educational outcomes for all children. This qualitative case study examined how the implementation of The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships (a national model released by the U.S. Department of Education) assisted one elementary school with building a family literacy program. Participants in the study included seven teachers, two administrators, and four parents. Three major themes emerged from the data, indicating that participants utilized the framework to: (a) examine the school's culture, climate, and communication, (b) examine beliefs and practices, and (c) create a space for building knowledge and awareness. The findings suggest that the success of all family engagement efforts are predicated upon a thorough examination of beliefs and culture, which is the first step in the process of developing effective home-school partnerships.

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DEDICATION

For my daughter Cameron. You can accomplish any goal you set for yourself. I love you always!

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“And so the question is whether all of us -- as citizens, and as parents -- are willing to do what’s necessary to give every child a chance to succeed. That responsibility begins not in our classrooms, but in our homes and communities. It’s family that first instills the love of learning in a child.”
– President Barack Obama, January 2011

At the beginning of my teaching career, I was employed in a suburban school district mostly serving middle-class families. At the elementary school where I was employed traditional demonstrations of parental involvement were extremely evident. For example, many parents could be seen volunteering in classrooms, attending school events and functions, and the Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) always raised a substantial amount of money from organizing various fundraisers. In my third year teaching at this school, the socioeconomic status of the community began to shift. This particular community was severely affected by the “mortgage crisis” in 2007 and many families moved or were forced into foreclosure. As the school community began to change to one serving mostly working class families, the school’s PTO collapsed and no longer were many parents seen at school functions and events. Teachers began to voice their concerns, expressing ideas such as, “parents don’t care about their child’s education” or “The parents never show up. No wonder these kids can’t read”. Even administrators were heard declaring, “The same parents are the ones you see at every event”. I recall listening to the volume of criticisms and began reflecting on my own childhood. I was raised in a working class family. Because of work obligations and economic limitations, my parents never volunteered in my classrooms and rarely ever attended school functions and events. Yet, I can attest to the fact that my parents absolutely valued my education and expressed great care and concern about my academic success. They unquestionably supported my achievement, but it was through ways that were invisible to the teachers, administrators,

and school staff that didn't define and view parental involvement beyond traditional means and definitions.

When I became a reading specialist, working with students who struggled academically, I would often hear a similar rhetoric from teachers, exclaiming that the parents of these struggling students didn't care for their children or value education. This phenomenon has been present in all three school districts (of varying socioeconomic levels) for which I have been employed.

The topic of parental involvement permeates many schools throughout the country. One reason is because of the longstanding belief that the family, as the child's first teacher, can be a chief agent for academic achievement. This belief has been substantiated by a large body of research informing the link between parental involvement and student achievement (e.g. Barnard, 2004; Englund, Luckner, Whaley, & Egeland, 2004; Epstein, 1986; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, & Fendrich, 1999; Jeynes, 2003, 2005). This wealth of research demonstrates the integral and variable roles that families play in the education of children, such as: supporting academic achievement, motivating and inspiring the determination to succeed, influencing beliefs and values about education, as well as decreasing dropout rates and encouraging regular school attendance (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2003, 2005). Certainly, the decades of research on parental involvement strongly suggest that students are most successful when they have supportive and actively engaged families. Furthermore, the relationship between parental involvement and student achievement, is found to be consistent with families of all economic, racial/ethnic, and educational backgrounds as well as for students at all ages (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

The research and scholarship on literacy development and attainment has also examined the crucial role of the family, especially in culturally diverse environments (Hart & Risley, 1995; Heath, 1983; Neuman, 2006; Purcell-Gates, 1995; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). These studies have all exemplified the notion that literacy development is thoroughly embedded within the cultural and social contexts of the home environment and that the home environment can be a prolific site for early literacy and language development for young children. However, the narrative on the home literacy practices for low income families is one that is often professed as being non-existent or erroneous (Heath, 1983; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). This perception is often used as an explanation for the widening disparities in academic and literacy achievement among low income and culturally and linguistically diverse students (Lareau, 1987). As a possible solution to narrow this achievement gap, policy makers as well as educational reformists, have historically focused their efforts on the family (Compton-Lilly, Rogers, & Lewis, 2012). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Title 1 program is one such example. Title 1 has a long history of requiring schools to have parental involvement policies to help meet the needs of low achieving students in high poverty areas (Mapp, 2012). The No Child Left Behind Act (2002) requires schools to specifically outline how teachers, parents, and students will work together to improve the academic and social outcomes for students. For example, schools may develop a written parental involvement policy or school-parent compacts, with the goal of encouraging schools to work directly alongside parents (Mapp, 2012).

Traditionally schools have attempted to increase parental involvement and improve literacy achievement by creating programs focused on changing the family (Auerbach, 1995). Many programs have the goal of instilling mainstream literacy practices into the lives of the

families without regard for their community or cultural values (Auerbach, 1995; Longwell-Grice & McIntyre, 2006). The home literacy experiences and practices for many culturally and linguistically diverse children, however, do not complement the expected literacies of the school (Heath, 1983; Lapp, Fisher, Flood, & Moore, 2002). Purcell-Gates (1995) describes the hardships faced by children whose home literacy environments are unrelated to the mainstream literacy practices emphasized in schools:

The language and purposes for print encountered through formal education are foreign.

The vocabulary is too hard and removed from their daily lives; the conventional syntax of exposition and complex fiction is unfathomable. Without a great deal of support and motivation, their level of literacy skill attainment is bound to be low compared with that of their peers who are natives of the educated literate world (p. 183).

This difference between home and school literacies creates a cultural divide with great implications for future literacy development (Zygouris-Coe, 2007). However, when schools create opportunities in which parents and school personnel work together, where parent contribution is respected and acknowledged, and collaboration is encouraged, this cultural divide has the potential to become mitigated; creating the possibility of increased literacy achievement *and* positive home-school partnerships (Cox 2005; Hoover-Dempsey & Whitaker, 2010; Morrow & Young, 1997).

Statement of the Problem

It appears as though policy makers have begun to realize the vast potential that creating home-school partnerships has on increased educational outcomes for all children, as evidenced by recent policy changes. For example, the ESEA (2002) makes reference to parental involvement in various sections of the law; with the most detailed information found in Section

1118. However, for the first time in the history of the ESEA, the law defines parental involvement; stating parental involvement to be:

The participation of parents in regular, two-way and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities including ensuring -

- that parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning;
- that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school;
- that parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child;
- the carrying out of other activities, such as those described in section 1118 [Section 9101(32), ESEA].

Although the current law provides some direction and guidance on how to fulfill parental involvement mandates, the bulk of the task remains on the shoulders of school districts, school administrators, and other school personnel as they are charged with transforming their school buildings into places where home-school partnerships are encouraged and fostered; where parents are allowed to be *full partners in their child's education* as stated in the federal law, but schools continue to struggle with meeting these requirements (Mapp, 2012). For many schools, establishing home-school partnerships requires an examination and confrontation of a variety of issues involving race, class, ideology, and epistemology; leaving many school administrators, educators, and parents unprepared and confounded on how to successfully implement practices to achieve effective parental involvement and home-school partnerships (Epstein, 2013; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Weiss, Lopez, Rosenberg, 2010). As Mapp & Kuttner (2013) explain:

These mandates are often predicated on a fundamental assumption; that educators and families charged with developing effective partnerships between home and school

already possess the requisite skills, knowledge, confidence, and belief systems - in other words, the *collective capacity* - to successfully implement and sustain these important home-school relationships (p. 5).

Sadly, these assumptions are rooted in fallacies. The truth is, very often teachers leave educator preparation programs unprepared to handle the demands of establishing and sustaining home school partnerships (Epstein & Sanders, 2006). This phenomenon is exemplified in the results of a study conducted by Epstein, Sanders, and Clark (1999) where 161 schools, colleges, and departments of education leaders (SCDE) across the United States were surveyed and asked if they believe their present students are prepared to conduct school, family, and community partnerships; with only 7.2% of SCDE leaders strongly agreeing that new teachers who graduated from their programs are fully prepared to conduct partnership work with families and communities. These results are in spite of 58.4% agreeing that knowledge and practical skills in school, family, and community partnerships are “very important” (with another 40.3% stating “somewhat important”) for student teaching (Epstein, Sanders, & Clark, 1999).

Principal preparation programs are also lacking in content involving parental relations, leaving many school leaders and administrators unprepared to handle the responsibilities of creating and sustaining home school partnerships (Hess & Kelly, 2005). Teachers and principals corroborate these findings, as both consistently identified effectively engaging parents and the community as one of the most significant challenges of their work, as reported in the MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Challenges for School Leadership (2012). Teachers and school leaders often convey a strong desire to develop relationships with all families from diverse backgrounds, yet they express being confounded and overwhelmed with how to best accomplish this task, which often leads to the implementation of random and unrelated parental engagement

activities that fall flat and fail to cultivate into effective partnerships (Epstein, 1995, 2013; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013).

Purpose of the Study/Rationale

Given the importance of establishing mutually satisfying home school partnerships, it is clearly essential that teachers, school leaders, and other school personnel learn know how to communicate with all families of varying racial, socioeconomic, linguistic, cultural and academic backgrounds in order to create effective, equitable, and sustainable partnerships that build mutual respect and trust between schools and parents. Utilizing a framework, such as the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships may assist schools with accomplishing this task.

The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships serves as a national model for developing effective partnerships between the family, school, and the community. According to Mapp and Kuttner (2013), the framework “is designed to act as a scaffold for the development of family engagement strategies, policies, and programs”, thereby, guiding school leaders and teachers in considering the necessary conditions for establishing and sustaining effective home-school partnerships (p. 6). The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships supports schools in designing partnership initiatives that work towards building capacity among educators and families around student success (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013).

The rationale for establishing and sustaining positive home-school partnerships has been recognized, as evidenced by the multitude of research studies demonstrating the beneficial link between home-school partnerships and increased student academic and social outcomes (e.g. Barnard, 2004; Epstein, 1986; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Izzo,

Weissberg, Kasprow, & Fendrich, 1999; Jeynes, 2003). However, moving past this verification is where research is limited (Dearing, Krider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006; Glueck & Reschly, 2014; Reschly & Christenson, 2009). According to Glueck and Reschly (2014) “the influence of and rationale for schools partnering with families is well established, and scholars are increasingly calling for a shift in research focus from the question of “why” to more process-related questions of “how” and “what works” (p. 298).

The purpose of this study was to examine how the implementation of The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships achieves its intended results, as one elementary school used this framework to support their efforts in building a family literacy program. This study closely examined the interplay among all stakeholders (parents, teachers, and school administrators) as they worked together to build a partnership program; thereby adding to the process related research examining home-school partnerships.

Research Questions

The following research question guided this study:

1. How does one elementary school utilize the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships to support their efforts in building a family literacy program?
 - a. How do the participants’ perceptions of their own and others’ roles and relationships change over the course of the study?
 - b. How do the assumptions, beliefs, behaviors, and goals of the parents, teachers, and school administrators evolve as a result of utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships?

- c. How do participants view the role of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships in supporting their work to build a family literacy program? What is helpful? What is not? What is missing?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical model upon which this study was influenced identifies three major contexts in which students learn and develop – the family, the school, and the community (Epstein, 1987, 1990, 1995). These three overlapping spheres of influence position the student at the center, and may be drawn together or pushed apart based upon the interactions of individuals at home, in school, and/or in the community (Epstein, 1995, 2010). This model asserts that student learning and development would be more successful when families and schools overlap in their goals, resources, and practices – encouraging collaboration, communication, and coordination (Epstein 1987, 1990, 1995). This model views student achievement and learning as a shared responsibility of the home and school, as Epstein (2010) states, “This perspective assumes that schools and families share responsibilities for the socialization and education of the child. Teachers and parents are believed to share common goals for their children, which can be achieved most effectively when teachers and parents work together” (p. 26).

The theoretical model of overlapping spheres of influence accounts for the various changes in types and purposes of parental involvement as the child grows and develops (Epstein, 1995, 2010). This model is based on a developmental framework, acknowledging that schools and families “build a changing, cumulative history of relationships” as students grow and develop (Epstein, 2010, p. 31). Within the external structure of the model, three main forces - time, experience in families, and experience in schools - determines how much and to what

extent of overlap can occur at any point in time (Epstein 1990, 1995, 2010). The internal structure showcases the interpersonal relationships and interactions that occur between and among the individuals at home, school, and within the community; accounting for organizational communication and individual communication (Epstein, 1990, 1995, 2010).

When teachers and school leaders emphasize a separation of the spheres of influence, they may say, “If the family would just do its job, we could do our job”. And when parents emphasize a separation of the spheres, they may state, “I’ve raised this child; now it is your job to educate her” (Epstein, 1995, p.83). This mind-frame accentuates a division between the home and the school; decreasing interaction and pulling the spheres apart (Epstein, 1990). However, when teachers, parents, and school leaders embody the theory of overlapping spheres of influence, they become partners; increasing their interactions and sharing the necessary knowledge and skills to increase student academic achievement and foster successful growth and development. This creates what Epstein (1987) calls *family-like* schools and *school-like* families. Epstein (1995) explains, “Family-like schools welcome all families, not just those that are easy to reach. A school-like family recognizes that each child is also a student... reinforce the importance of school, homework, and activities that build student skills and feelings of success” (p. 83).

Generally, this study was also influenced by the perspective that literacy learning and attainment is a developmental process that begins in infancy and is therefore embedded and intertwined within the social and cultural contexts of the child’s environment (Char, Carter, & Pool, 2009; Sulzby & Teale, 1991). This “emergent” perspective on literacy development recognizes that young children have multiple meaningful experiences with written language before they ever receive formal instruction (Teale, 1986). Influenced by a sociocultural

perspective to literacy learning (Vygotsky, 1978), it is believed that children develop and attain literacy through conversations with adults, as well as, engaging in and having direct involvement with acts of literacy with the support of adults. This interaction, known as scaffolding, is crucial to the development of emergent literacy skills as well as later conventional literacy achievement (Landry & Smith, 2006; Strickland & Morrow, 1990).

Additionally, my own experiences have been a driving force of inspiration, and have guided and shaped my perception of the role of families and schools in establishing and maintaining home-school partnerships.

Definition of Terms

The definitions below are included to ensure a common understanding of key terms used throughout this study:

Ethnic Minority: In this study, ethnic minority is defined as a person or group of people who differ in race, culture, or nationality from the dominant group.

Family Literacy: For the purposes of this study, family literacy is defined as the myriad ways in which families learn and use literacy within the contexts of their home, community, and daily lives.

Home-School Partnerships: Home-School Partnerships refer to the collaboration between the home (parents and other family members) and the school (school teachers, administration, and other school personnel) to work together in various ways and share the responsibility for student success.

Low Income: Low income is defined as households earning less than twice the federal poverty line as measured by a students' eligibility for the federal government's free and reduced price lunch program.

Parental Involvement: Parental involvement is defined as the participation of parents in a child's education which can take a variety of forms, including, but not limited to, attending school activities, communicating with the school, assisting with homework, and encouraging high expectations for academic achievement.

Summary

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. This chapter began with an introduction of home-school partnerships and discussed the factors contributing to the issues surrounding establishing effective home-school partnerships in schools and school districts. The purpose and rationale for the study was also discussed and the research questions, that guided this study, were stated as well. The theoretical framework that underpins this study was provided, as well as definitions for terms that are used throughout this dissertation.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature on home-school partnerships and family literacy as well as the effective practices in developing and sustaining home-school partnerships around literacy achievement. Chapter 3 describes the methodology of this research study, including the research design, participants, data collection, and analysis of procedures. Chapter 4 provides a detailed description of the setting, participant information, as well as a discussion of the themes that emerged from the data. Finally, a discussion of the findings is presented in Chapter 5, as well as implications for all stakeholders, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

“My vision for family engagement is ambitious... I want to have too many parents demanding excellence in their schools. I want all parents to be real partners in education with their children’s teachers from cradle to career. In this partnership, students and parents should feel connected—and teachers should feel supported.”

—Arne Duncan, Former U.S. Secretary of Education May 3, 2010

Introduction

Since its unveiling by former Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships has served as the national model for developing and sustaining effective partnerships between the family, school, and community (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). This framework seeks to support schools in their partnership efforts by reinforcing an acknowledgement of the necessary conditions to building capacity around effective home-school partnerships (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). This study aimed to examine how the implementation of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships supports teachers, administrators, and parents in their partnership efforts, as one elementary school utilized this framework as a scaffold while designing a family literacy program.

A significant body of research has demonstrated the positive outcomes of family involvement on literacy achievement, especially in elementary school students (Fan & Chen, 2001; Ginsburg-Block, Manz, & McWayne, 2010). Therefore, what follows is an in-depth review of the literature surrounding family literacy and effective home-school partnerships. This chapter is organized into four sections. The first section provides a historical overview of the field of family literacy, discussing its origins and examining major criticisms within the field. The next section explores the research on home-school partnerships by exploring existing models

for parental involvement, as well as, examining the challenges to establishing effective and sustainable partnerships. The third section merges these two fields by examining the research on effective practices in developing and sustaining home-school partnerships around literacy achievement. The final section provides a summary of the literature presented and explores gaps within the literature; establishing the significance of this study.

A Historical Overview of Family Literacy

Denny Taylor's foundational book, *Family Literacy: Young Children Learning to Read and Write* (1983) is viewed as the source that originally coined the term "family literacy" (Anderson, Anderson, Friedrich, & Kim, 2010; Anderson, Anderson, & Teichert, 2013; Anderson, Lenters, & McTavish, 2008; Compton-Lilly et al., 2012). Her book described how literacy was used in six middle-class families by documenting the daily literacy events of the young children in these families (Anderson et al., 2008). However, interests in the literacy development of young children began well before this time. The 1960's showed an increase in research interests focused on the literacy advancement of young children before formal instruction. Delores Durkin's (1966) prominent study which examined the familial and home environment of children, who learned to read before receiving any formal instruction, is one example. Her findings assisted in the understanding of family characteristics that can be attributed to early literacy development. As Doyle (2012) states:

She observed that there was no simple connection between socioeconomic status and early reading. What was important was that these parents spent time with their children, reading to them, responding to their questions and requests for help, and demonstrating in their own lives that reading is a rich source of relaxation, information, and contentment (p. 87).

Marie Clay's (1975) studies with children entering kindergarten in New Zealand also began around the mid 1960's. Her findings showed that young children were able to construct their own knowledge about print (Doyle, 2012). Both studies by Clay and Durkin exemplify what has come to be known as the "emergent" perspective on children's literacy development, which recognizes that young children have multiple meaningful experiences with written language before they ever receive formal instruction, and further states that these experiences are crucial to later literacy acquisition (Teale, 1986).

The federal funding of Head Start, in 1965, began a nation-wide effort to increase the educational outcomes for children living in poverty, by providing families with early intervention. The development of family literacy programs stemmed from the research on emergent literacy and this early intervention movement (Doyle, 2012; Compton-Lilly et al., 2012). Therefore, programs emerged from a set of beliefs and assumptions about the development of literacy acquisition and the role of literacy acquisition within families, rather than from a theoretical framework (Wasik & Herrmann, 2004).

Family literacy gained popularity in the 1980s, as a multitude of programs developed throughout the country supported by public and private organizations (e.g. Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, Toyota Family Learning; National Center for Family Literacy). The largest federally sponsored family literacy program, Even Start, was established in 1988 and focused on families of low socioeconomic status (Compton-Lilly et al., 2012). The Even Start program provided grants to local agencies providing interventions for low income families. The programs were mandated to include four components: early childhood education, adult literacy, parent education, and interactive parent and child time around literacy activities (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Even Start, as well as other intervention programs based off of

this model, aimed at improving the educational outcomes for children living in poverty and thereby deemed at-risk. These programs believed that working with parents and children together would create the opportunity for parents to help their children, thereby reducing the risk of academic failure (Wasik & Herrmann, 2004). However, in 2009, Even Start was recommended for defunding due to insufficient lack of evidence in program effectiveness (McCallion, 2006).

These intervention programs aimed to break the “cycle of poverty” by providing intergenerational instruction in language and literacy for young children, effective parenting strategies, and adult literacy classes to help parents develop increased literacy skills and create literate home environments (Compton-Lilly et al., 2012; Doyle, 2012). Low literacy was seen as the cause for America’s economic ills and family literacy had become the solution, as Darling (2004) states:

The intergenerational cycle of poverty is a self-perpetuating one, as low literacy skills are passed down from parent to child in a legacy of want. How can we help families – not just adults, not just children, but *families* – to break this cycle? (p. 19).

The Deficits versus Strengths Approach

As family literacy programs developed over the course of the years, major concerns have been expressed about these programs and their intended outcomes. One major criticism is the privileging of “school literacies” or mainstream approaches to literacy in the home; viewing the literacy practices and skills of low socioeconomic families as inadequate (Anderson et al., 2010; Auerbach, 1989).

Theoretical differences exist in family literacy programs that are developed from a deficit approach (Auerbach, 1989). Laden in the theoretical perspective of programs operating from this perspective are assumptions about the realities of the lives of the families; assumptions about the

value placed on education, and that low income parents are inept at creating positive literacy home environments (Auerbach, 1995). Although previous research has refuted these assumptions, they continue to persist in many family literacy programs. For example, in the examination of 48 family literacy websites, equally representing the 10 provinces and three territories of Canada, Anderson et al. (2008) found that 31 websites declared messages that low income families needed to be taught how to read to their children, how to value literacy, and/or how to parent. However, multiple research studies have found that low income families value education, have a range of literacy materials in their homes, and that literacy plays an important role in their everyday lives (e.g. Purcell-Gates, 1995; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988; Teale, 1986).

Family literacy programs developed from a deficit approach justifies these assumptions; blaming the victim for their own marginalization by attributing literacy deficits to family inadequacies (Auerbach, 1995). These family literacy programs view the “problem” as residing within the family, as Darling (1992) explains, “The seeds of school failure are planted in the home, and we cannot hope to uproot the problem by only working within the schools. We must approach it through the family” (p. 5). When family deficits are viewed as the singular motive for literacy deficiencies, the solution resides in changing the behaviors and values of the family (Auerbach, 1995).

The alternative to the deficit approach is the strengths approach to family literacy. The strengths approach draws on the experiences of the family and the needs of the community to inform instruction rather than simply transferring school and mainstream literacy practices into the homes of low income families (Auerbach, 1989; Hill & Diamond, 2013). These programs have been developed and modeled after the ideals of Paulo Freire, declaring that literacy is only

as meaningful to students as it relates to the realities of their daily lives (Auerbach, 1989). Conformity is not the goal of a family literacy program developed from a strengths approach, rather empowering families to challenge the structural and institutional factors of society which provide access to proficient literacy attainment is a primary objective (Auerbach, 1995).

Although many programs claim to function from a strengths approach to family literacy, for some this idea is purely empty rhetoric. One explanation for the persistence of the deficit notion is that the discourse of the dichotomies of “strengths and deficits” is concealing fundamental differences amongst various programs. According to Auerbach (1995), “the anti-deficit rhetoric has become so pervasive, that it masks fundamental underlying differences in values, goals, ideological orientations and pedagogical approaches” (p. 644). Auerbach (2001) further warns that family literacy developers must make the ideological position and the pedagogical approach evident, otherwise well intentioned programs may inadvertently take the shape of deficit based programs; stating the program is built on the strengths of its participants, but the program *design* places the blame of literacy inequities on the families instead of focusing on changing the institutions which give rise to complex social concerns, such as unemployment, poverty, and crime (Auerbach, 2001).

Home-School Partnerships

At the unveiling of the U.S. Department of Education’s adoption of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships, then Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, expressed what has been supported by a wealth of research on parental involvement, “When parents are involved in the educational process of their children, students are more likely to attend school regularly, to take more rigorous courses, earn higher grades, graduate, and go on to both college and careers” (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). The important role of parental

involvement has appeared in other federal education reform efforts as well. As stated in Chapter One, the ESEA Title 1 program has a long history of requiring schools to establish parental involvement programs and activities to help bridge the achievement gap between low achieving students in high poverty areas (Mapp, 2012). For example, in 1968 Title 1 regulations required schools to involve parents in the planning, operation, and evaluation of Title 1 programs and by 1972 the federal programs required each state department of education to set up parent advisory councils (Mapp, 2012). Although the parental involvement mandates were mostly eliminated under the Regan administration, the recent version of the ESEA, No Child Left Behind, amended in 2002, revealed a resurgence of parental involvement provisions with mandates for schools to provide programs and activities that increase and encourage parental involvement (Mapp, 2012). For example, Section 1118 of the ESEA explains that every Title 1 school must have a written parental involvement policy that is developed with and approved by parents, as well as, conduct an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the written policy (Mapp, 2012). Although the ESEA provides a comprehensive model of parental involvement, guidance on how to implement the various provisions and activities provided in Section 1118 is limited and schools are struggling to fulfill the requirements. This point is exemplified by a recent Title 1 monitoring report in which the U.S. Department of Education (2008) reported that parental involvement requirements are one of the weakest areas of program compliance (as cited in Mapp, 2012).

Models of Parent Involvement

The Epstein Model (2009) is one of the most widely acknowledged and utilized frameworks for parental involvement (Bower & Griffin, 2011). The original model discussed five types of methods educators can use to build effective home-school partnerships; however, a

sixth type was later added to the model (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). The six types of parent involvement include: 1. Parenting: assisting parents with establishing home environments conducive to student learning; 2. Communication: establishing a system for effective bidirectional communication (home to school as well as school to home); 3. Volunteering: recruiting parent volunteers; 4. Learning at Home: providing home learning activities; 5. Decision Making: including parents in school decision making; and 6. Collaborating with the Community: providing resources and services to families and students as well as provide services to the community (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Epstein et al., 2009). This model includes more traditional forms of parental involvement, such as volunteering, but also seeks to establish a partnership between the home and school by encouraging shared decision making as well as acknowledging communication as a bidirectional effort (Bower & Griffin, 2011).

Ingram, Wolfe, and Lieberman (2007) used the Epstein (2009) framework of parental involvement in their study of high-achieving, low income schools. The researchers examined the role of parental involvement in schools where more than 50% of students were minorities and identified as low income. Despite these “at-risk” demographics, the participating schools scored in the top third of the state on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT; Ingram et al., 2007). Although the schools presented activities spanning all six types of parental involvement identified by the Epstein Model (2009), results of the self-reported survey indicated that parents in these high-achieving, low income schools had a stronger tendency to participate in only two types – parenting and learning at home. The results of this study appear to substantiate other research, which suggests that certain aspects of parental involvement are more closely related to student achievement than others (Fan & Chen, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2005). A case study conducted by Bower and Griffin (2011) also found limitations of the Epstein

Model. The researchers examined a high-minority, low income school (Hawk Elementary) utilizing the Epstein Model (2009) of parental involvement as its guiding framework. However, the teachers of Hawk Elementary reported continued struggles with parent involvement despite consistent implementation of the Epstein framework. As a result, the researchers proclaim that “The Epstein Model may not fully capture how parents are or want to be involved in their children’s education, indicating that new ways of working with parents in high-minority, high-poverty schools are warranted” (Bower & Griffin, 2001, p. 84). Research conducted by Jeynes (2005, 2010) corroborates the sentiments expressed above, indicating that the Epstein Model (2009) may be too simplistic.

Another model of parental involvement, developed by Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1995, 1997), focused on understanding *why* parents become involved and *how* their subsequent involvement influenced the educational outcomes of children. As the researchers further developed and adapted the model in subsequent work (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005), it has evolved to show parental involvement as a process that moves through various levels (Hoover-Dempsey & Whitaker, 2010).

Beginning with motivations for why parents become involved (Level 1), the model explores three main sources of motivating factors: personal motivators, contextual motivators, and school/program responsiveness to family life contexts (Hoover-Dempsey & Whitaker, 2010). Included in these motivating factors are parents’ role construction (what parents believe they are supposed to do to support their child’s education) and self-efficacy (the belief that their involvement will have an effect on their child’s learning). Thus when parents believe their role is to help their child succeed in school and that their efforts will have a positive impact, they are more likely to persist in parental engagement in spite of various challenges and obstacles

(Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). A notable attribute of role construction and self-efficacy is that both are socially constructed and subject to the influences of teachers, school leaders, as well as family members and other social groups (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Hoover-Dempsey & Whitaker, 2010). A study conducted by Sheldon (2002) exemplified this notion as he explored the relationship between parents' social networks and their self-reported level of involvement at home and at school. By analyzing survey responses from 195 mothers of students in grades 1-5, the researcher found that the resources gained from parents' social networks contributed to the level of parental involvement at home and at school (Sheldon, 2002). These findings have significant implications for increasing parental involvement and developing home-school partnerships, as Sheldon (2002) states, "connecting an isolated parent with one or two other parents as a strategy to increase involvement at home or school, may be a promising avenue for schools that desire greater connections with families" (p. 313).

Also included in these motivating factors are parents' perceptions of general and specific invitations for involvement from the student, teachers, and other school personnel, as well as parents' perceptions of the responsiveness of schools to specific familial circumstances (Hoover-Dempsey & Whitaker, 2010). When parents perceive the school as offering manageable opportunities for involvement that clearly convey the school *desires* and *values* their input, parents are more motivated to become engaged and involved (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Hoover-Dempsey & Whitaker, 2010). Therefore, the most critical finding displayed by this model of parental involvement suggests that increasing parental involvement and developing home-school partnerships are significantly subject to the influences of the school – school leaders, teachers, as well as other school personnel.

The model developed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) also gives credence to the variety of ways that parents may become actively involved in their child's education (Level 1.5); incorporating more salient forms of involvement, such as clear communication of parental expectations and aspirations, which has been shown to provide the greatest effects on student achievement (Fan & Chen, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey & Whitaker, 2010; Jeynes, 2005, 2010). In addition to these salient forms, the model also incorporates more traditional forms of parental involvement (such as volunteering at school), as well as involvement activities at home, and family-school communication (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Levels 2-5 highlight the benefits of parental involvement as it pertains to the educational outcomes of children once parents have decided to become involved in whatever form(s) chosen by the parent (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997). The model suggests that parents influence the educational outcomes of their children through four major mechanisms: encouragement, modeling, reinforcement, and instruction (Level 2); highlighting the variety of ways that parents support their children's learning. The following level (Level 3) incorporates the students' perception of parental involvement; suggesting that students may perceive their parents as more responsive to their interests and understanding during involvement activities, thereby influencing the students' attentiveness to the tasks and the overall learning from involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Whitaker, 2010). Therefore, parental involvement, and students' perceptions of involvement, support positive proximal learning outcomes (Level 4) such as: academic self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, self-regulation, and social self-efficacy for relating to teachers; when used by students during school learning tasks these learning outcomes promote academic achievement (Level 5; Hoover-Dempsey & Whitaker, 2010).

The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships was developed based on existing research from multiple disciplines, such as: family engagement and home-school partnership strategies and practices, adult learning and motivation, and leadership development (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). One of the major factors differentiating this framework from the other models discussed above is the significant emphasis placed on building the capacity of all stakeholders – teachers, administrators, staff, and parents. Mapp and Kuttner (2013) attribute the lack of sustained opportunities to build capacity amongst educators and families as one of the major factors contributing to the implementation of random and unrelated parental engagement activities that continues to occur in many schools around country. The components of capacity-building utilized by this framework is based off of the work of Higgins (2005), which delineates capacity into four parts: 1. Capabilities: human capital, skills, and knowledge; 2. Connections: Important relationships and Networks – social capital; 3. Confidence: individual level of self-efficacy; 4. Cognition: assumptions, beliefs, and worldview (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013).

The Dual-Capacity Building Framework consists of four components (see Figure 1): the first describes the challenges to capacity that must be addressed; the next component articulates the vital conditions to creating successful home-school partnerships; the third component identifies the anticipated capacity goals; and the final component describes the capacity-building outcomes for school and program staff, as well as, families (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013).

Figure 1: The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships



The Dual-Capacity Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships is not prescriptive, as Mapp and Kuttner (2013) emphasize the necessity to begin all partnership efforts by “assessing local conditions, assets, and needs” (p. 25). Effective capacity building opportunities must be designed for the particular contexts, for which they are developed (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Upon stating this, however, the framework does identify “process” and “organizational” conditions, which must be considered and evaluated to ensure participants gain the necessary knowledge, motivation, and the ability to sustain effective partnerships over time (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013, p. 9). The process conditions are defined as “the key to the design of effective initiatives for building the capacity of families and school staff to partner in ways that support student achievement and school improvement” (Mapp & Kuttner, pg. 9). The organizational conditions are factors, identified through research on effective family engagement strategies, which support the implementation and sustainability of mutually beneficial home-school partnerships (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013).

Challenges to Effective and Sustainable Partnerships

Incompatible definitions of parental involvement. Discrepancies exist among the research community on how to define parental involvement, as inconsistent definitions abound in the literature (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2005). Traditional views of parental involvement define involved parents as those who help with homework, volunteer and/or are involved in activities at school, attend school related events such as parent-teacher conferences, as well as communicate with teachers (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Fan & Chen, 2001). Furthermore, some researchers have also included parenting behaviors and practices (such as household rules related to education and relating aspirations for their children’s achievement) in their definitions of parental involvement (Fan & Chen, 2001, Jeynes,

2005). As research continues to explore the various ways in which parents are involved, missing from the above definitions are the subtler forms of parental involvement, which have been shown to produce the greatest impact on student academic outcomes (Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2010).

Although overt displays of engagement have not been shown to have the greatest impact on students' academic achievement, elementary and secondary schools continue to apply traditional definitions of parental involvement (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Gillanders et al., 2012; Lawson, 2003). In a meta-analysis on the relationship between parental involvement and students' academic achievement, Fan and Chen (2001) found that parents who displayed and communicated high academic aspirations and expectations to their children saw the strongest relationships with academic achievement. In addition, Jeynes (2005) found similar results in his meta-analysis on the relation of parental involvement to urban elementary school students' academic achievement. Jeynes (2005) found that subtler aspects of parental involvement, such as parental expectations and style, yielded the strongest relationship with academic achievement. Furthermore, Jeynes (2005) also found that more traditional aspects of parental involvement, such as attending school functions, checking homework, and establishing household rules, were found to have the weakest relationships with academic achievement. Although Fen and Chen (2001) examined general student population and Jeynes (2005) looked specifically at urban elementary school students, both studies indicated the same result, exemplifying the need for schools to redefine parental involvement to include subtler aspects, such as parental expectations.

As previously stated, teachers, administrators, and other school personnel are more inclined to attribute parental involvement to traditional, school-centric activities, such as volunteering and attending school events or functions (Gillanders et al., 2012; Lawson, 2003). However, defining parental involvement solely by school-centric activities creates a problem for

many low-income and culturally diverse families, as Gillanders et al (2012) explains, “They include activities that have been designed to fulfill only the perceived mission of the school and are based on the belief system and lives of white middle class families” (p. 286). With little consideration given to family and life circumstances, focusing solely on school-centric activities can potentially do the very opposite schools and teachers are intending to do. Instead of increasing parental involvement, school-centric activities actually exclude many low-income and minority parents (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Low income families tend to have more stringent work schedules, lack of resources for multiple child care or related family responsibilities, and/or lack of transportation that can prevent parents from participating in school-centric activities (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005;) Thus, teachers and other school personnel often view and label these families as uninvolved; however, these parents may very well be involved in supporting their students’ learning – just in ways that go unnoticed and unrecognized by the school. An example of this can be found in a study conducted by Gillanders et al. (2012), who interviewed twelve minority mothers from two small urban elementary schools (six from each school). They participated in focus group interviews discussing parental involvement. Also, the mothers in this study had all been identified by their schools as being “uninvolved” (Gillanders et al., 2012). The researchers, however, found these mothers to be very involved in their children’s education, as they all indicated they played an important role in the education of their children and referred to ways in which they actively supported their children’s academic development at home (Gillanders et al., 2012). Several mothers also expressed their desire for the school to be more accommodating to the needs of their families; expressing discontinuity between the values of the school and the context of their lives - as several mothers were single parents and/or bilingual and not confident in speaking and understanding English

(Gillanders et al., 2012). These findings illustrate the notion that parents often seek opportunities for involvement that coincide with the demands of their everyday lives (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). However, if the school does not respect and respond to these familial circumstances by providing varied opportunities for parents to become involved, these families then become excluded and labeled as “uninvolved” by the teachers and staff of the school.

Lawson (2003) also found discrepancies in parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement when he recruited twelve teachers and thirteen parents from a low-income urban elementary school to participate in semi-structured ethnographic interviews. The researcher also asked for the school’s assistance in recruiting parents who were viewed as “involved” and “uninvolved” – 6 involved and 7 uninvolved parents participated in the study (Lawson, 2003). The results of this study also found substantial differences in the perception of the meanings and functions of parental involvement, as Lawson (2003) explains, “The parents’ narratives in the study reflect a community-centric orientation to involvement that may include, but largely supersedes, the school-centric forms of parent involvement defined by the teachers” (p. 116). Community-centric parental involvement begins within the community and then branches out to the school. Traditional school-centric forms of parental involvement start with the needs of the school and the teachers, then branches out into the home environments of the children (Lawson, 2003). Both the parents and teachers in this study emphasized the need for mutually beneficial partnerships between the parents and staff as a necessary recourse for student learning and success in school. However, the large discrepancies in the perceptions of parental involvement must be addressed in order for effective home-school partnerships to occur (Lawson, 2003).

In her analysis of parental involvement in urban schools, Lightfoot (2004) describes how the term parental involvement can “divide rather than unite” when applied to low income and

minority parents (p. 93). She explains how a limited view of the meaning of parental involvement makes it difficult to see parents outside of pre-established parameters that have already been set, as parental involvement in poor urban schools is often viewed as low or nonexistent compared to their middle-class and affluent counterparts (Christianakis, 2011; Lawson, 2003; Lightfoot, 2004). The study by Lawson (2003) exemplifies this notion, as teachers often used their school-centric meanings of parental involvement to judge the actions, behaviors, and decisions of the parents, further perpetuating teachers' deficit views and reinforcing their beliefs that the parents did not value education. For example, many teachers in the study believed that the uninvolved parents needed to be "trained" by the school on how to value education and how to view parental involvement as a necessity, however, the researcher found similar perceptions and responses in numerous inquiries between the "involved" and "uninvolved" parents; the primary difference between the two groups was that the "involved" parents were seen at the school (Lawson, 2003). These deficit-based evaluations create a source of tension in the relationship between the schools and families and further perpetuate the inequalities that exist in society (Auerbach, 2007; Lareau, 1987).

Teacher and Administrator Preparation. Teachers and school leaders often report a desire to incorporate and involve parents in the school community, however, confusion on how to best accomplish this task is apparent as many teachers and school leaders often convey a lack of parental engagement despite their efforts to do so; which is especially exemplified in low-income and urban schools with large populations of minority families (Lawson, 2003; Lightfoot, 2004; Mapp & Hong, 2010; Mapp & Kutter, 2013). With little or no guidance, many teachers and school leaders are left to face the complex challenge of meeting educational policy and

school mandates to increase parental involvement with an unclear focus on what this categorically means for their school.

The reality is that many teachers and administrators leave educator preparation programs with very few if any courses on how to conduct, organize, and employ effective strategies to create partnerships with families and communities (Broussard, 2000; Epstein et al. 1999; Epstein & Sanders, 2006). For example, in a study on principal preparation, researchers examined 210 syllabi collected from a national cross-section of 31 principal-preparation programs and found that only 2.6% of time was allocated to parental relations (Hess & Kelly, 2005). Similar results have been found in teacher preparation programs, as Epstein (2013) states, “Teacher education programs have been criticized for weak curricula; courses that ignore results of new research; and limited contact with real schools, students, families, and communities” (p. 115). Without adequate training and professional development, teachers and administrators are often unaware of the complex, multi-layered, and dynamic strategies needed to engage families and create sustaining and effective partnerships (Mapp & Hong, 2010).

Effective Practices in Home-School Partnerships and Family Literacy

A wealth of research on the development and acquisition of literacy has substantiated the belief that literacy acquisition does not begin upon entry to formal schooling (e.g. Durkin, 1966; Handel, 1999; Hart & Risley, 1995; Teale 1986). Rather, literacy acquisition is viewed as a developmental process, beginning at birth and continuing to develop throughout adulthood (Handel, 1999). Early experiences with language and literacy, however, vary significantly amongst children that reside in culturally diverse and low income homes as compared to their white, middle –class counterparts (Compton-Lilly, 2003; Heath, 1983; Purcell-Gates, 1995; Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). Schools have traditionally and continuously failed to meet the

literacy needs of low income and culturally diverse children (McCarthy, 1997). A possible explanation for the literacy achievement gap amongst culturally diverse and low income children is that children from these homes may have experiences with language and literacy that do not easily connect with the ways in which literacy is used at school. Shirley Brice Heath's (1983) ethnography of two working-class communities (Roadville and Trackton) exemplifies this concept. Heath (1983) observed the residents of Roadville (a largely white community) using literacy for entertainment or educational purposes in ways that the Trackton (a largely black community) residents did not; concluding that the home literacy practices of children from Roadville connected more easily with school literacy practices that provided them with an advantage that the children of Trackton did not receive. In, the latest installment of Heath's (2012) work, *Words at Work and Play*, she further explains the disconnection between the children of Trackton and the school practices that they encountered, stating:

When Trackton children entered desegregated schools and faced white teachers for the first time, they found their ways of talking did not match what they had known at home. They found it perplexing to be asked questions to which they knew their teachers already had the answers. Trackton children were used to giving information, not repeating it... They remembered stories well; they did not do as well with separate letters, single words, or step-by-step sequenced reading programs. (p. 12).

Several studies have reproduced the outcomes of Heath's (1983) ethnography (e.g. Compton-Lilly, 2003; McCarthy, 1997; Purcell-Gates, 1995; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988); thereby authenticating the sentiment that literacy development is thoroughly embedded within the cultural and social contexts of daily life. This concept is closely related with the "funds of knowledge" approach; that all households contain, "historically accumulated and culturally

developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992, p. 133). When teachers capitalize on students’ funds of knowledge, they learn from the cultural and social experiences of students, thereby allowing teachers to more truly connect students’ experiences to academic content for meaningful engagement and learning (Moll, 2015).

When schools serve as venues for family literacy programs, it creates the potential to bridge home and school literacies. Handel (1999) describes the benefits of a school based family literacy program, “Schools gain the benefit of a wider understanding of the home context of their students... Parents will get to know teachers and, reciprocally, teachers will get to know parents. Learning will go both ways and facilitate two-way communication” (p. 40). Indeed, school based family literacy programs can serve as an avenue to collaborative and mutually beneficial partnerships between the home and the school.

An Array of Programs

School based family literacy initiatives consist of a range of approaches attempting to bridge home and school literacy practices, including reading incentive programs, “take home” books and activity bags, newsletters providing tips on how to read to children, family journals, book logs (signed by parents), and book giveaways (Dudley-Marling, 2009). Instead of providing a setting for rich conversation and collaboration, many of these initiatives simply attempt to transfer mainstream literacy practices into the homes of students without regard for the cultural and social contexts of students’ home lives. These initiatives are oriented from a deficit approach; assuming the homes of its students are void of crucial literacy learning without input from families, highlighting a model of communication that moves one way (from the school to the home).

A study conducted by Dudley-Marling (2009) illustrates how parents perceived and experienced such literacy initiatives. In his study, 18 African American and 14 immigrant ESL (English Second Language) parents living in two poor urban communities served by low-performing schools in the northeastern United States participated in open-ended qualitative interviews (Dudley-Marling, 2009). The researcher found the most common “school-to-home” literacy initiative identified by parents were efforts that required students to read at home, either independently or with parents; however, the overwhelming majority of parents were not provided with suggestions of what the children should be reading at home (Dudley-Marling, 2009). Furthermore, parents expressed difficulty in finding the additional time to add independent reading or reading aloud to their children into their nightly routine. In fact, the majority of parents distinguished “just reading” as separate from homework and reported concern that independent reading or shared reading often resulted in a lack of motivation to read by the children (Dudley-Marling, 2009, p. 1736). Although the schools encouraged independent and shared reading, many parents did not view these activities as helping to meet the literacy needs of their children and therefore, did not value this practice as essential to improving literacy achievement, as Dudley-Marling (2009) explains:

For most parents interviewed for this study, ‘just reading’ fit with neither their definition of homework nor their beliefs about reading instruction. Parents expressed a desire to comply with teachers’ requests to encourage their children to read, but reading at home – whether in the form of shared reading or independent reading – was generally not seen as important as ‘homework’...Parents did not see the instructional value of ‘just reading’ (p. 1737).

For parents in this study, independent or shared reading did not appear to have the same meaning as these practices have at school. Additionally, no parent in this study recalled a time when their child's school ever asked them about their perceived needs to support the literacy development of their children or how they felt about the "school-to-home" literacy initiatives, demonstrating a one-way decision making model characterized by a one size fits all approach to family literacy (Dudley-Marling, 2009).

While reflecting on their two-year family literacy project which took place in an urban low-income elementary school, Longwell-Grice and McIntyre (2006) discussed the possibilities and the pitfalls of the projects' design and implementation. The identified pitfalls included: failure to seek involvement in planning from the community and having limited contact with the community, inconsistent attendance by participants, and being seen as just another "transient project" (Longwell-Grice & McIntyre, 2006). The researchers also discussed the deficit views of parents held by the teachers, demonstrated my comments such as, "They just come for free books" and "They just see the program as a babysitter" (Longwell-Grice & McIntyre, 2006 p. 125). The teachers' beliefs about the parents conflicted with the interviews conducted by the researchers, where they found parents shared a deep value and concern for their children's education. Lastly, the researchers discussed the conflict they faced of serving the desires of the families or the goals of the school, as the parents expressed the desire to have time together as a family, however, the school and teachers expressed their desires to have explicit teaching of literacy skills and strategies to the parents (Longwell-Grice & McIntyre, 2006). In similar fashion to the schools discussed in the study by Dudley-Marling (2009), this school also exemplified a one-way decision making model, rendering it virtually impossible for the family literacy project to fulfill the original goals of the researchers, who stated their plans were "to

build on families' knowledge and interests, and to teach specific ways families can assist their children with literacy” [Emphasis Added] (Longwell-Grice & McIntyre, 2006, p. 118).

Success Criteria

In a study conducted by Neuman, Caperelli, and Kee (1998), researchers reviewed all grants awarded by the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy. The researchers reviewed all files with the goal of understanding how families viewed their involvement in these programs; identifying six program features that seemed most critical to participants (Neuman et al., 1998). The features included: involving participants in planning, including family-based activities, including ongoing assessment, creating social networks, involving an integration of services, and providing next steps for learning and career development. Neuman et al. (1998) discovered through their analysis that a collaborative approach where programs are reflective of participants needs, are among the key principles for conceptualizing new efforts to support families.

Successful partnerships are dependent upon the establishment of trusting and collaborative relationships (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). However, translating this knowledge into action is easier said than done. Christenson and Sheridan (2001) developed a framework for creating positive interactions and building collaborative relationships amongst families and school staff, identifying four essential conditions: *Approach* – is reflected in the recognition of the variety of ways families may be involved and expectations for family involvement; *Attitudes* – the perceptions held about families and family-school partnerships; *Atmosphere* – the school climate and culture for interaction between families and school staff; *Actions* – the behaviors or strategies that support home-school partnerships. The conditions of *Approach, Attitude, and Atmosphere* create the environment for *Actions* to occur and must be investigated and attended to prior the establishment of home-school initiatives (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). If student

achievement through the establishment of effective home-school partnerships is the goal for *all* students, initiatives for increasing parent involvement must not attempt to fix families by transplanting mainstream values into the homes of culturally diverse students. Certainly this approach and attitude create a deficit atmosphere that is completely antithetical to establishing positive relationships and effective partnerships (Reschly & Christenson, 2009).

Henderson and Mapp (2002) identified three essential practices for engaging culturally diverse families: 1. build trust through collaborative relationships amongst parents, school staff, and the community; 2. recognize and respect cultural and social differences; and 3. create conditions for shared decision making and responsibility by seeking out and addressing the needs of the family. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) also identified strategies to develop a schools' capacity for parental involvement, which included: creating a welcoming and inviting atmosphere, learning about parents' goals and perspectives on their child's learning and culture, offer a full range of involvement opportunities, and establish systematic and consistent attention to improving family-school relationships. All of the aforementioned essential conditions and strategies create an environment for partnership, benefiting all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. Henderson and Mapp (2002) explain, "When schools build partnerships with families that respond to their concerns and honor their contributions, they are successful in sustaining connections that are aimed at improving student achievement" (p. 7).

Effective Family Literacy Programs – Creating Partnerships

An example of a family literacy program successful at establishing effective home-school partnerships is provided by Nistler and Maiers (2000). The goals of the program were to show an appreciation for the skills that parents have, as well as empower them with additional skills to further develop their understanding of literacy development through parents participating in a

variety of literacy activities at school (Nistler & Maiers, 2000). The program took place in a low-income urban elementary school in one first grade classroom. The school is characterized by high mobility, as the mobility rate for the classroom was 85% during the first year of the study. Although the program was initiated by the teacher (Angela), she held strong beliefs about shared decision making and shared responsibility as demonstrated by the collection of input from families during sessions as well as through the sharing of resources. Angela described her beliefs in an interview with the researcher stating, “When I met with parents it was important that they knew it was their program. Decisions were jointly made, from our meeting times and dates to the types of activities planned...I learned to listen more and talk less” (Nistler & Maiers, 2000, p. 672). Although the program took place at the school during instructional hours, barriers to participation were removed through sustained communication and flexibility, as transportation was negotiated, baby-sitting was offered or younger siblings were welcomed, and if a parent couldn't be present that day a “substitute family member” was welcomed to take their place (Nistler & Maiers, 2000). Angela made constant efforts to build collaborative and trusting relationships with the parents by consistently encouraging their participation and voicing her appreciation for their efforts. Angela's efforts appeared to pay off as 96.5% of the parents participated in the weekly Friday sessions during year one and 94.5% of parents participated in year two (Nistler & Maiers, 2000). Indeed, this program is an exemplary example of how one teacher can create the essential conditions necessary for establishing effective home-school partnerships.

Another family literacy program demonstrating effective home-school partnerships, took place in a linguistically diverse elementary school where 50% of the students were considered to be limited English proficient, and 68% of the students received free and reduced lunch (Barone,

2011). Vicky (the school's parent facilitator) initiated the parent literacy project in kindergarten. Along with the literacy coach and the kindergarten teachers, Vicky provided a welcoming environment for parents and younger children (Barone, 2011). This program was also characterized by consistent encouragement for parent participation, constant communication, and flexibility – taking into consideration the needs of family members. For example, “if parents missed a session, they were welcome to come to school on any day that week...She [Vicky] continued to support their involvement, whether frequent or infrequent, and made them aware of how important they were to their child's learning (Barone, 2011, p. 381). Just as Angela (from the previously discussed study), Vicky's efforts also appeared to increase involvement, as 93% of parents participated in the program (Barone, 2011).

Another study by Steiner (2008) also incorporated parents' perceptions and understandings of their children's literacy. The researcher designed and implemented an 8-week program in two first-grade classrooms with goals of teaching parents how to support their children's literacy learning in school as well as teaching the teachers effective ways to incorporate home-literacy practices in the classroom (Steiner, 2008). Parents in this study reported gaining increased knowledge and understanding about their children's literacy development and teachers also reported creating increased opportunities for parental involvement as well as increased collaboration with parents surrounding the literacy development of their children (Steiner, 2008). This study serves as an example of how building the capacity of both parents and teachers can create mutually beneficial relationships that served both the needs of the family and the needs of the school.

All of three of the previously discussed programs are demonstrations of the possibility of family literacy programs and effective home-school partnerships on increased academic

achievement for students. Each program design implemented bi-directional communication, shared power in decision making, and recognizing and respecting the diverse needs of the participating families by incorporating flexibility into the program design; indicating a no one size fits all approach to family literacy and home-school partnerships.

Summary

Engaging in effective and sustainable partnership work with families is a complex and dynamic process – hinging on the mutual understanding of appreciation between families and schools (Mapp & Hong, 2010). The rationale for creating positive home-school partnerships has been recognized and substantiated by the multitude of research studies demonstrating the beneficial link between home-school partnerships and increased student achievement (e.g. Barnard, 2004; Epstein, 1986; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Izzo, Weissberg, Kaspro, & Fendrich, 1999; Jeynes, 2003). Research on literacy acquisition and development has also recognized the critical role of the family (e.g. Durkin, 1966; Handel, 1999; Hart & Risley, 1995; Teale 1986). It has been surmised that children from culturally diverse and low-income homes enter school with varied experiences with language and literacy – many of them incongruent with the school literacy practices they will come to partake in on a daily basis (Compton-Lilly, 2003; McCarthy, 1997; Purcell-Gates, 1995; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). School based literacy practices, and the literacy practices of the mainstream culture are one in the same. Auerbach (1989) states, “the literacy practices of the mainstream become the norm and have higher status in school contexts” (p. 173). Family literacy programs can be the bridge to connect home and school literacies for culturally diverse and low-income students by encouraging effective home school partnerships which support increased literacy achievement. Effective home-school partnerships construct trusting relationships with families, build parent

capacity, and establish effective home learning activities designed in collaboration with parents – valuing parent partnerships and shared responsibility; thereby increasing the literacy achievement for all students.

In 1978, Lightfoot discussed the strained relationship between the school and the family when she stated:

There are very few opportunities for parents and teachers to come together for meaningful, substantive discussion. In fact, schools organize public, ritualistic occasions that do not allow for real contact, negotiation, or criticism between parents and teachers. Rather, they are institutionalized ways of establishing boundaries between insiders (teachers) and interlopers (parents) under the guise of polite conversation and mature cooperation (as cited in Edwards, Paratore, & Roser, 2009, p. 91).

Although this statement was represented over thirty years ago, the practices and policies of schools have continued to remain relatively the same. Frey (2010) echoes this sentiment as she explains, “Family literacy projects have resulted in important changes in the lives of students and families, but schools remain relatively untouched by the process” (p. 51). Indeed, there are barriers to overcome in establishing effective home-school partnerships. If the goal is increased achievement for *all* students, then a paradigm shift must be made.

The literature in this chapter informs this study significantly by confirming the disconnect that continues to exist between families and schools. Though most educators desire to engage with families and support the ideals of parental involvement, many continue to lack the knowledge, skills, and belief systems necessary to implement and sustain effective home-school partnerships (Epstein, 2013; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Mapp & Hong, 2010; Weiss, Lopez, & Rosenberg, 2010). The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships was

designed to combat this problem. Examining how this framework achieves its intended results will add to the limited process-related research on creating and implementing effective and sustainable home-school partnerships.

The literature in this chapter also confirms the various barriers which prevent the establishment of effective and mutually beneficial home-school partnerships. Therefore, gaining an understanding of how all stakeholders interact and engage with the Dual Capacity-Building Framework will assist in acquiring insight into what specifically works, as well as what doesn't work, for administrators, teachers and parents in alleviating the known barriers to establishing effective and mutually beneficial home-school partnerships. The following chapter discusses the methods that were utilized in this study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

“Education is a conversation, not a transfusion.” – Sir Ken Robinson

Introduction

As previously stated, most educators desire to engage with families and support the ideals of parental involvement, however, many continue to lack the knowledge, skills, and belief systems necessary to implement and sustain effective home-school partnerships (Epstein, 2013; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Mapp & Hong, 2010; Weiss, Lopez, & Rosenberg, 2010). The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships was designed to assist schools, teachers and school leaders, with examining the conditions necessary to alleviate this issue.

The purpose of this study was to examine how the implementation of The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships achieves its intended results, as one elementary school uses this framework to support their efforts in building a family literacy program. This study closely examined the interplay among all stakeholders (parents, teachers, and school administrators) as they worked together to build a partnership program; thereby adding to the process related research examining home-school partnerships.

The following research question guided this study:

1. How does one elementary school utilize the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships to support their efforts in building a family literacy program?
 - a. How do the participants’ perceptions of their own and others’ roles and relationships change over the course of the study?

- b. How do the assumptions, beliefs, behaviors, and goals of the parents, teachers, and school administrators evolve as a result of utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships?
- c. How do participants view the role of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships in supporting their work to build a family literacy program? What is helpful? What is not? What is missing?

This chapter will explore the methodology and methods that were used in this study. I will also discuss sampling, data collection and data analysis strategies. Standards of validation and trustworthiness are also addressed. The final section provides a summary of the chapter.

Research Design

As previously discussed, the task of creating mutually satisfying partnerships, where parents are allowed to be full partners in their child's education, continues to plague many schools across the country – as many teachers and school leaders are not armed with the necessary knowledge, skills, and ideals to accomplish this task (Epstein, 2013; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; Weiss, Lopez, Rosenberg, 2010). This often leads to the implementation of random and unrelated parental engagement activities that fall flat and fail to cultivate into effective partnerships despite the intentions of teachers and school leaders (Epstein, 1995, 2013; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). An exploration into the perspective of how all stakeholders seek to alleviate the aforementioned problem can provide guidance to other schools, teachers, school leaders, and parents as they seek to establish effective home-school partnerships.

Merriam (2009) states, “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 5). In this study, I sought to understand and explore the

specific ways in which participants utilized and engaged with the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships. This inquiry was explored through the perspectives of representatives from all the stakeholder groups (parents, teachers, and school administrators). Therefore, a qualitative approach was most appropriate for the purposes of this study.

All researchers bring various beliefs and philosophical assumptions to the research process (Cresswell, 2013; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). These beliefs and philosophical assumptions are directly tied to the way researchers come to understand the research problem, the way the problem is studied, as well as how the data is interpreted and analyzed (Cresswell, 2013; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). As Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2011) explain, “Methodology is a bridge between our philosophical standpoint (ontology and epistemology) and methods; it is related to how we carry out our research” (p. 38).

Ontologically, as a qualitative researcher, I embrace the idea of multiple realities and it was the intent of this research study to explore the multiple realities of all involved participants. As Creswell (2013) states, “Different researchers embrace different realities, as do the individuals being studied and the readers of a qualitative study... qualitative researchers conduct a study with the intent of reporting these multiple realities” (p. 20). In addition, I further believe that knowledge is gained through the subjective experiences of people. Because of this interpretive epistemological stance, the views and perspectives of all involved participants are essential to this research study. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) explain, “This [interpretive] perspective asserts that social meaning is created during interaction and people’s interpretation of interactions” (p. 27). The methods by which these understandings are gained will be explained in the following sections of this chapter.

Research Approach

A qualitative case study approach was used in this study. Merriam (2009) defines a case study as, “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (p. 40). There is some discrepancy amongst researchers in defining case study as a methodology, as Stake (2005) explains, “Case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied” (p.443). There is universal agreement, however, that the unit of analysis is the defining characteristic of case study research (Cresswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2005). The unit of analysis is a bounded system, which Cresswell (2013) explains is “often bounded by time and place. It [the bounded system] also has interrelated parts that form a whole” (p. 294). The bounded system or “case” in this study was one Midwestern suburban elementary school. The case was selected because of its representation of the aforementioned issue with school administrators, parents, and teachers lacking the collective capacity to establish effective and sustainable home-school partnerships.

Merriam (2009) identifies three specific features of case study research: 1. Case studies are *particularistic* in that they focus on a “particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon” (p. 43). 2. Case study reports provide a rich and thick description of the case being studied, including all variables and their interaction over a period of time. 3. Case studies are *heuristic* in that they “illuminate the reader’s understanding of the phenomenon under study” (p. 44); bringing new meaning, extending the experience of the reader, or confirming the known. Case study is an appropriate research approach for this study because it will allow me to develop an in-depth understanding of the particular issue of establishing home-school partnerships through a real-life, in progress bounded system.

There are several types of case studies distinguished by their intent and design (single case or multisite study; Cresswell, 2013; Merriam; 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). The *instrumental case study* (Stake, 1995) is selected with the intent to provide insight into an issue, problem or concern; the case is of ancillary interest, selected to illustrate and advance understanding of the issue. This qualitative case study was a single instrumental case study because the “case” (one Midwestern elementary school) will be used to provide further insight and develop an in-depth understanding into the process of creating effective and mutually beneficial home-school partnerships.

School Demographics

The elementary school where the study took place is located in a Midwestern suburban town. The school services students in grades Kindergarten thru fifth grade with a total enrollment of approximately 450 students. The racial/ethnic demographics of the school are almost evenly split amongst students identifying as White, Black, and Hispanic - with 28% identifying as White, 31% as Black, and 31% as Hispanic. The other racial/ethnic backgrounds of the students are: Asian (5%), two or more races (4%), and American Indian and Pacific Islander (each at 0.2%). Additionally, 9% of students are identified as English Learners. This school is identified as a low income school and receives Title 1 funding, as 69% of students are identified as low income (eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches, live in substitute care, or whose families receive public aid).

Sampling

Purposeful sampling is often used in qualitative studies, as Merriam (2009) explains, “purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be

learned” (p. 77). This study utilized purposeful sampling, specifically convenience sampling and snowball sampling.

The case in this study was one elementary school in the school district for which I was employed. In addition to being representative of the issue of creating effective and sustainable home-school partnerships, this case was also selected because of its accessibility. Since I was an employee of the school district, I have had previous encounters with the two administrators of this school. This professional relationship allowed me to have easier accessibility to school records, official documents, and other classified sources of data; thereby allowing for the analysis of rich sources of information.

The participants in this study were also selected using snowball sampling. According to Merriam (2009), “this strategy involves locating a few key participants who easily meet the criteria you have established for participation in the study. As you interview these early key participants you ask each one to refer you to other participants” (p.79). Teachers and parents were selected utilizing the snowball sampling strategy in order to provide rich sources of information.

Criteria for participant selection:

1. Teacher participants must be district employed certified classroom teachers or staff (i.e. special education teachers, reading specialists, or librarians) who have worked at this elementary school for at least one full school year.
2. Parent participants must have a current child and/or children who have attended this elementary school for at least one full school year.

Through the sampling techniques described above, I was able to recruit seven teachers, four parents, and both administrators (principal and assistant principal) to participate in the study. It

took two months to recruit the 13 participants. The process of this recruitment is detailed below.

Teacher Participants

This elementary school had a home-school committee consisting of eight teachers. I began recruiting teacher participants by attending a home-school committee meeting. At the end of the meeting, I explained the purpose of the study and presented the research questions. All members of this committee were present and I invited all teachers that were interested in participating to stay after the meeting to ask questions and voice any possible concerns. After this meeting, three teachers (who were members of the home-school committee) expressed interest and agreed to participate in the study.

Additionally, I received permission from both administrators to send an email to the entire staff. In total, two emails were sent to the entire staff of the school. In both emails, the purpose of the study and the research questions were explained, as well as assurance of anonymity and confidentiality. No one responded to either of these invitations to participate in the study. Therefore, I asked the three teachers, that had already agreed to participate in the study, to each refer two potential participants. I then sent personal emails to this list of potential teacher participants. Again, in these emails, I explained the purpose of the study, research questions, and assured anonymity and confidentiality. Out of the six emails sent, four teachers responded and agreed to participate in the study.

Parent Participants

I began recruiting parent participants by sending an email to all classroom teachers and the school administrators asking for a list of families that they believed were uninvolved or whom they wished were more involved. As it was my intention to explore multiple perceptions

and realities, I believe it was critical to the purpose of this study to reach out to families that were not viewed as highly involved or engaged by the teachers and administrators of the school. Four teachers and one administrator responded to this request. In total, 30 families were provided. I called all of these families and invited them to participate in the study. During the conversation, I explained the purpose of the study and assured anonymity and confidentiality. One parent from this list agreed to participate in the study.

Additionally, I was also provided the contact information of families that were members of the school Parent-Teacher Association (PTA). I sent an email blast to all members as well as the PTA executive board. There were approximately 100 families registered as members at the time of the study. The president and secretary of the PTA were the only parents that responded to this email. Both agreed to participate in the study. At my request, the president of the PTA also referred two potential parent participants. I called both of these parents and one of them agreed to participate. Additionally, I asked all of the four parent participants to refer any other parents which they believed would be interested in participating in the study. Each reported that they contacted multiple friends, but they did not have anyone that showed interest in the study.

Data Collection

The data collection for case study research draws on several sources of information. Yin (2009), for example, recommends six types of information to collect in case study research: documents, archival records, direct and participant observations, interviews, and physical artifacts. Multiple and varied sources of information was collected in order to provide a detailed and in-depth understanding of establishing effective and mutually beneficial home-

school partnerships while utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to allow for flexibility in response to the emerging information provided by the responders. Merriam (2009) explains this flexibility while discussing semi-structured interviews stating, “the largest part of the interview is guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, and neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time” (p. 90). All teacher, parent, and administrator participants engaged in two semi-structured interviews – before the Dual Capacity-Building Framework was introduced, and after the framework was utilized. (see Appendix A for the teacher interview protocols, Appendix B for administrator interview protocols, and Appendix C for parent interview protocols).

Observation

As Creswell (2013) explains, “Observation is one of the key tools for collecting data in qualitative research” (p. 166). Observations were conducted in two phases (see Appendix D for observation protocol). The first phase of observations took place while I introduced the Dual Capacity-Building Framework to all participants (parents, teachers, and administrators) during the first collaboration meeting. During this phase of the research study, I was a participant observer – engaged in the activities along with the participants so as not to disturb the natural activity of the group. After the Dual Capacity-Building Framework was introduced, the participants engaged in a second collaboration meeting to further utilize of the framework to assist with planning the family literacy program. During this phase of the study, I planned to be a nonparticipant/observer as participant – watching and taking field notes without direct

involvement with any activities or participants (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). However, at this second meeting, one of the administrator and teacher participants specifically asked me questions to further clarify concepts presented in the framework. Therefore, during both collaboration meetings, I was a participant observer. A description of both collaboration meetings is provided below.

Collaboration Meetings. The collaboration meetings took place during the monthly January and February (2016) PTA meetings. This was agreed as the best plan for these meetings to take place because there was already a set date, time, and place established. It was also already on the school calendar so all participants (parent, teacher, and administrator) were able accommodate their schedules. The first meeting took place in the school's library and lasted for 1 hour and 10 minutes. During the first 15 minutes of the meeting, I presented the Dual Capacity-Building Framework to all participants. A discussion about the framework and perceptions of parental involvement at this school took place for the remainder of the meeting. All parent participants, six teacher participants, and one administrator attended the first meeting.

The second collaboration meeting also took place in the school's library. This meeting lasted for 1 hour. All teacher participants, three parent participants, and the other administrator participant attended this meeting. During this meeting, further discussion about the framework – specific research supporting the framework, and specific plans for the school were discussed. A detailed description of the discussions that took place, as well as the contents of both collaboration meetings, is further discussed in Chapter 4.

Documents

Public record documents such as the schools official parent involvement policy was collected and analyzed for emerging themes. This document was found on the school's website and serves as the written parental involvement policy required by section 1118 of the ESEA. Additionally, the bi-monthly parent newsletter was also collected and analyzed during the months of November 2015-February 2016.

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, data analysis is a process that does not follow a step-by-step linear set of procedures (Creswell, 2013; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Merriam, 2009). In fact, data collection and the analysis of the data occur concurrently, as Merriam (2009) explains, "Analysis begins with the first interview, the first observation, the first document read" (p. 165). Creswell (2013) explains data analysis in qualitative research as a "the process of moving in analytic circles" (p. 182). I followed the three analysis strategies presented by Creswell (2013). First, I organized the data using file folders as my data management system. I labeled each folder with the type of data, location, and name (pseudonym) of the participant as applicable. Next, I familiarized myself with the data by reviewing all documents and reading interview transcripts multiple times. While reading and reviewing, I wrote key concepts that emerged in the margins of the documents, observation protocols, and interview transcripts. This allowed me to reflect on the major ideas presented by the data and form initial categories. Furthermore, I also looked for evidence of multiple perspectives about each category (Stake, 1995). Finally, I categorized the data into themes with detailed descriptions.

Classifying the data into themes begins with the process of coding. Upon initial review of the data, I developed a short list of six codes. Upon further review and rereading, I expanded the list to 18 codes and classified the data into five categories. These categories were further

examined and developed into three overarching themes. Creswell (2013) explains, “Themes in qualitative research (also called categories) are broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea” (p. 186). Upon engaging in a “holistic analysis” of the case, detailed descriptions, themes, and interpretations will be presented in the following chapters to establish an in-depth description and detailed understanding of the case (Creswell, 2013, p. 100).

Time Frame for the Study

Data collection for this study occurred over a five-month period. As previously stated, it took two months to recruit all participants, therefore, data collection began in November-December 2015. During those two months, I conducted, transcribed, and analyzed initial individual interview data, as well as, collected and analyzed the school newsletters and the official school parent involvement policy documents. As previously stated, the collaboration meetings were held in the following two months (January and February 2016). In the final month of the study (March 2016), I conducted, transcribed, and analyzed final individual interview data.

Standards of Validation & Trustworthiness

The purpose of this study was to examine how the implementation of The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships achieves its intended results, as one elementary school uses this framework to support their efforts in building a family literacy program. This study closely examined the interplay among all stakeholders (parents, teachers, and school administrators) as they worked together to build a partnership program. Several steps were taken to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of this research study.

First, triangulation was utilized in order to provide validity of the findings by clarifying meaning. According to Stake (2005), “acknowledging that no observations or interpretations are perfectly repeatable, triangulation serves also to clarify meaning by identifying different ways the phenomenon is being seen” (p. 444). This study triangulated the data gathered from individual interviews with all participants, observation and field notes collected during both collaboration meetings, and the documents gathered (described in the previous section) to gather multiple perceptions and identify emerging themes.

Credibility was also attained by utilizing member checks. This strategy was employed to prevent the misinterpretation of meaning gained from participant responses. According to Merriam (2009) the process of member checking involves taking “your preliminary analysis back to some of the participants and ask whether your interpretation ‘rings true’... participants should be able to recognize their experience in your interpretation or suggest some fine-tuning to better capture their perspectives” (p. 217). All participants were provided with the transcription of both of their interviews, as well as a summary of my preliminary findings. All participants were provided the opportunity to contact me with any concerns or questions. None of the participants contacted me with any concerns or questions.

Providing rich and thick descriptions will allow for transferability of the research study. As Creswell (2013) explains, “[detailed descriptions] enables readers to transfer information to other settings and to determine whether the finding can be transferred” (p. 252). This will allow the readers to determine whether the case is like or unlike their own setting. This process of providing detailed descriptions will also allow for naturalistic generalizations (what the reader learns from the case or its application to other cases) to occur from this qualitative case study (Stake, 1995). I provide rich and thick descriptions of the case and findings in Chapter 4.

Finally, researcher bias was clarified and provided so that readers are aware of any past experiences, orientations, or biases that were likely to shape the interpretation and approach to this study.

Summary

This study utilized a qualitative instrumental case study approach to examine the interplay among all stakeholders (parents, teachers, and school administrators) as one elementary school utilizes the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships to support their efforts in building a family literacy program. This chapter discussed the methodology of this research study, including the research design, participants, data collection, and analysis of procedures. The next chapter will provide a detailed description of the case and discuss the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

“To engage families means to look at our practices and procedures through a different lens– the lens of families.” - Steven Constantino

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine how the implementation of The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships achieves its intended results, as one elementary school utilized this framework to support their efforts in building a family literacy program. The interplay among all stakeholders (parents, teachers, and school administrators) was also closely examined, as all parties worked together to build a partnership program.

The following central question guided the data collection and analysis for this study:

1. How does one elementary school utilize the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships to support their efforts in building a family literacy program?

The following sub-questions framed this investigation:

- a. How do the participants’ perceptions of their own and others’ roles and relationships change over the course of the study?
- b. How do the assumptions, beliefs, behaviors, and goals of the parents, teachers, and school administrators evolve as a result of utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships?
- c. How do participants view the role of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships in supporting their work to build a family literacy program? What is helpful? What is not? What is missing?

Data collection for this case study drew on several sources of information. Semi-structured interviews, observations, and several documents were collected and analyzed,

contributing to a detailed and in-depth understanding of how the participants at one elementary school utilized the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships. The first two sections of this chapter provide a detailed description of the case, including the setting, participant information, and the context in which this study takes place. A discussion of the themes that emerged from the data is also provided. The final section provides a summary of the findings.

Case Description

The Setting

The elementary school where this study took place is one of twelve elementary schools in a large suburban Midwestern school district. This school is one of the smallest elementary schools in the school district, servicing approximately 450 students in grades kindergarten through fifth grade and is situated within a subdivision community. This school is also the site for one of the school district's special education programs. Approximately one-fourth of the student population participates in this program, which provides intensive social/emotional, as well as academic support in a small self-contained learning environment.

The racial/ethnic demographics of the school are almost evenly split amongst students identifying as White, Black, and Hispanic - with 28% identifying as White, 31% as Black, and 31% as Hispanic. The other racial/ethnic backgrounds of the students are: Asian (5%), two or more races (4%), and American Indian and Pacific Islander (each at 0.2%). Additionally, 9% of students are identified as English Learners. This school is identified as a low income school and receives Title 1 funding, as 69% of the student population is eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches, live in substitute care, or have families who receive public aid, as defined by the federal government.

Participants

The 13 participants in this study consisted of: two administrators (principal and assistant principal), seven certified teachers, and four parents. The certified teachers consisted of classroom teachers, reading specialists, and the library/media center director. Special attention was given to verify that participants in the study were reflective of the student population and representative of the general diversity of the school. In addition, care was also taken to ensure that a variety of new as well as veteran teachers and parents were recruited to participate in the study. Table 1 provides a summary of descriptive data for all participants.

Table 1
Participant Demographic Information

Participants	Number of Years at the School	Racial/Ethnic Background
Ad1	3	White
Ad2	8	White
T1	2	Black
T2	10	Hispanic
T3	9	White
T4	2	Black
T5	5	White
T6	2	White
T7	9	White
P1	4	White
P2	2	Black
P3	3	Hispanic
P4	4	White

The Context

During the initial stages of planning this research study, I was able to have several conversations with both of the administrators (principal and assistant principal) at this school. They were looking to begin a family literacy program to get parents more involved in the literacy development and achievement of students. Both administrators seemed excited about the study taking place at their school and declared their openness in exploring any options that would help them achieve their goals. They both immediately agreed to participate in the study.

Recruiting teacher and parent participants came with much more difficulty, as explained in Chapter 3. Three teacher participants (who were members of the home-school committee) were the first to agree to participate in the study. However, three-to-four weeks went by without a single response from any other teacher or staff member at this school to multiple email invitations to participate in this study. Emails were sent to approximately 45 teachers and staff members. Recruiting parent participants was equally as difficult, as multiple emails were sent to 100 parents registered with the school's PTA. These emails also went without any response for several weeks. As well, only one, of the 30 families labeled as uninvolved that I called, agreed to participate in this study. Essentially, the recruiting of participating parents and teachers ultimately came down to personal relationships, as many of the teacher and parent participants, who eventually agreed to participate in the study, were recommended by other participants. As explained in Chapter 3, each of the three teachers from the home-school committee who originally agreed to participate in the study recommended two additional teachers. All recommendations were contacted personally. Additionally, the president and secretary of the PTA were the only parents that responded to the email sent to PTA members. Both agreed to participate in the study and at my request, the president of the PTA also referred two potential

parent participants. I called both of these parents and one of them agreed to participate. Furthermore, I asked all of the four parent participants to refer any other parents which they believed would be interested in participating in the study. Each reported that they contacted multiple friends, but they did not have anyone that showed interest in the study. Despite these challenges, however, all who agreed to participate appeared to be excited and truly interested in the purpose of this research study.

Scheduling did present some difficulties, so it was agreed that both collaboration meetings would take place during the scheduled monthly PTA meeting. Two of the parent participants were on the executive board of the PTA, and they both agreed to set the purposes of the two PTA meetings to allow for an introduction and exploration of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships. These meetings took place in the school's library.

Collaboration Meetings. The purpose of the collaboration meetings was two-fold. First, none of the participants had ever heard of, or more significantly, had any experience with the Dual Capacity-Building Framework. Therefore, one of the goals of the first meeting was for all participants (parents, teachers, and administrators) to come together to receive an introduction of the framework at the same time. Additionally, the teachers and administrators of this school had never had a conversation with the parents about parental involvement and creating home-school partnerships. This meeting was the first experience where representatives from all stakeholders gathered together to plan a partnership program. Therefore, the second, and most significant goal of the collaboration meetings was for all participants to collaborate and use the framework as a guide to plan a family literacy program.

In attendance at the first collaboration meeting was: *Ad2, all parent participants, and six teacher participants*. I began the meeting by introducing myself and reiterating the purpose of this study as well as the goal of this meeting. Additionally, all participants were provided a copy of the framework (see Figure 1), as well as a copy of the supporting text which provides a detailed explanation of all of the components of the framework. I began by giving a 15-minute presentation (see Appendix E for presentation slides). This presentation provided an overview of the research demonstrating why it is important to establish effective partnerships with all families, an overview of the framework, including the purpose behind its creation and design, as well as a detailed explanation of each component of the framework.

There are four components in the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships. The first component states the challenges that many schools and districts face on how to establish and sustain positive relationships with families. In my presentation I explained that principals and teachers across the country identify “family engagement” as one of the most challenging aspects of their work, and that families also have needs and may have had negative experiences with schools in the past, leading to distrust or feeling unwelcomed (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). The second component explains that opportunities must be created to develop the capacity of both school staff and families. These opportunities must have two types of conditions: process conditions and organizational conditions. In my presentation, I explained that all capacity building opportunities must be specifically designed to fit the particular circumstances for which they are developed. I further defined each condition explaining that, “process conditions must be met in order for adult participants to come away with new knowledge and the desire to apply what they have learned” (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013, p. 9). As well, organizational conditions must be put in place by the organization (school) to successfully implement and sustain family

engagement (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Furthermore, in my presentation, I defined each bullet point that is presented under the process and organizational conditions as found in the text supporting the framework. These slides of my presentation specifically stated that all initiatives must be:

- **Linked to learning** - events linked to teaching and learning goals. Programs that are focused on enhancing parents' abilities to work as partners to support students.
- **Relational** - a major focus is on building respectful and trusting relationships between home and school.
- **Developmental** - the focus of the initiative is on developing and building knowledge as well as empowering and enabling parents to be confident, active, and informed stakeholders.
- **Collective/Collaborative** - Initiatives that bring families and staff together for shared learning - focused on building learning communities
- **Interactive** - Participants must have the opportunity to practice what they have learned and receive feedback from each other, peers, and facilitators.
- **Systemic** - initiatives are designed as core components of educational goals.
- **Integrated** - building the knowledge and skills of the families and staff are embedded into all structures of professional development.
- **Sustained** - School leaders are committed to and have a systemic vision of family engagement and family-school partnerships (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013).

The third component further explains the importance for all family engagement initiatives to focus on building the capacities of both school staff and families. The framework also breaks

down capacity into four components. My presentation further explained these four components by specifically stating the following:

1. **Capabilities** - School staff need knowledge about the assets (funds of knowledge) in the community and about building trusting relationships. Families need knowledge about student learning and the workings of the school system.
2. **Connections** - Building networks/relationships (family-teacher, parent-parent, and connections with community agencies and services).
3. **Confidence** - Staff and families need to feel a sense of comfort and belief on own ability to be successful.
4. **Cognition** - Staff committed to working as partners with families and believe in the value of this work in improving student learning. Families need to view themselves as partners in their children's education (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013).

The fourth, and final part of the framework, describes the positive outcomes for staff and families prepared to engage in effective family-school partnerships. In my presentation, I explained that staff prepared to engage in partnerships with families can: a.) honor and recognize families' existing knowledge, skill, and forms of engagement; b.) create and sustain school cultures that welcome, invite, and promote family engagement; and c.) develop family engagement initiatives and connect them to student learning and development. Additionally, I explained that families prepared to engage in partnerships can engage in diverse roles such as: a.) supporters of their children's learning development; b.) encouragers of achievement; c.) monitors of their children's time, behavior, boundaries, etc.; d.) models of lifelong learning; e.) advocates for their child's learning; f.) decision-makers of educational options; and g.) collaborators with school staff (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013).

During the presentation, all participants were quiet and there were no questions or discussion. Immediately after the presentation, a parent participant began the discussion by describing the difficulties she encountered in attempting to recruit other parents to participate in the study. This began a conversation about how difficult it has been to get parents to be “involved” in the school. For example, T7 stated, “parents will come for things that are fun, but not for learning.” The conversation continued with many teacher participants and one parent participant (who is a member of the PTA) expressing that many uninvolved parents make excuses. Several stories were then shared about how attempts have been made to involve parents, but many state that they are “too busy”. Ad 2 replied, “So how do we change that? Where do we start?” A teacher participant stated that framework was a “full time job”. A parent participant agreed, holding up the framework and stating, “This is a tall order.” P2 began to explain how many parents feel intimidated or are afraid that they will be judged. P4 agreed and also added that she couldn’t recall a time that she had been asked her opinion about what she wants to know about her child or what she believes is important in her child’s learning. The room fell quiet and I ended the meeting by reiterating the key points discussed and questions for reflection. These entailed:

- What does it mean for parents to be involved? Comments expressed parents were making excuses.
- Does this school provide a welcoming and trusting environment? Comments addressed parents feeling intimidated or afraid that they will be judged.
- Is there a process or protocol in place for parents to provide their voice?

In attendance at the second collaboration meeting was: *Ad1, all teacher participants, and three parent participants*. This meeting took place in the same location as the first collaboration

meeting. Additionally, I provided the same copies of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework and supporting text, that I gave participants at the first meeting. I began this meeting by asking all participants to reflect on our last collaboration meeting and to also think about how the Dual Capacity-Building Framework can be utilized for their family literacy initiative. After a brief moment of silence, T3 began the discussion by expressing her disappointment with the “culture of the building”. Additionally, she expressed, “The foundation of creating partnerships is not happening here. We have no role for parents within the school.” This started a conversation among teacher participants on the ways that parents can have a leadership role at the school. Ad 1 interrupted the conversation to discuss the importance of administrator visibility. T7 added, “I felt bad that I couldn’t check the box that asked if parents were invited to meetings and things like that when filling out the 5 essentials survey.” She continued by stating, “We didn’t do that and it made me sad to admit that.” Ad 1 then asked me to explain some of the research around partnering with families. She specifically asked if I am aware of research that has demonstrated positive effects. Therefore, I shared the research by Fan & Chen (2001) and Jeynes (2005) which demonstrates that parents that communicate high academic aspirations and expectations to their children, has shown the strongest relationship with student achievement. This is opposed to traditional forms of involvement, such as parents volunteering and attending school functions, which has shown the weakest relationship with academic achievement. T3 replied to this statement by explaining how she has formed a relationship with one parent where they all (parent, student, and teacher) set literacy goals for the student. She then stated that this child has made the most substantial gains in her literacy achievement.

The conversation then shifted to bridging the language between home and school around literacy. Many parent participants appeared to like the idea of creating a shared goal. As P1

stated, “it would be nice to have my parent-teacher conference structured so we all know what we are working towards.” P4 agreed and told a story about when her child's teacher told her that her son needed to add more details to his writing. However, she was unsure about her role in supporting this goal. Additionally, she explained, “Should I have him write essays? Should I make him rewrite the papers he brings home?” The conversation continued around goal setting and engaging parents in the link between home and school literacy language. Ad 1 asked parents if they had been using the “learner quality questions” that had been sent home as part of the newsletter earlier in the school year. Only one parent stated that she attempted to use them and explained that she thought the questions, weren’t natural to her and she found them awkward. Other parents agreed. Ad 1, then explained the importance of the questions and Teacher, parent, and administrator participants agreed that creating shared literacy goals is where they should begin their family literacy program. Ad 1 also stated that there will be a commitment to form a new committee with parent representation. She added that this parent committee will branch off of the current home/school committee. This ended the meeting.

Utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework

All participants were provided two opportunities to come together for the purpose of collaborating and using the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships to assist with developing a family literacy program. Throughout the meetings, participants discussed a variety of issues and concerns about parental involvement at the school. Parent, teacher, and administrator participants shared their perspectives and participated in critical conversations about the meaning of parental involvement as well as the ways with which parents are represented within the school. This is as far as the participants progressed with “utilizing” the framework within the timeframe of this study. Although participants did not get very far in the

attempt to create a family literacy program, the discussions that took place at the collaboration meetings were essential.

The first part of the framework examines the challenge to building effective home-school partnerships. The authors of the framework attribute the abundance of ineffective family engagement initiatives to the lack of opportunities to build capacity among school staff and families (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). However, examining the challenges specific to the context of this school seemed to be a necessary pre-cursor to using the framework in its entirety to assist with planning a partnership program, especially since this is the first time any conversation of this magnitude has taken place at this school. Therefore, the critical discussions that occurred about the Dual Capacity-Building Framework, and the ideas represented within it, are how the participants in this study “utilized” the framework.

Findings

I began this research study with a desire to understand how the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships achieves its intended results; acting as a scaffold for the development of family engagement strategies and programs. The framework was designed to provide guidance for school leaders and teachers to consider the necessary conditions for establishing and sustaining effective home-school partnerships. Therefore, the overarching research question asked: *How does one elementary school utilize the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships to support their efforts in building a family literacy program?*

Three major themes emerged from the data:

1. Examine culture, climate, and communication
2. Examine beliefs and practices

3. Create a space for building knowledge and awareness

Each major theme is discussed further in relation to each stakeholder and the research sub-questions represented within it.

Examine Culture, Climate, and Communication

Sub-Question A: How do the participants' perceptions of their own and others' roles and relationships change over the course of the study?

Parent Participants

Before utilization of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework, all parent participants overwhelmingly indicated that their primary role was to be an advocate for their child. Parents identified this aspect as a key role in establishing and sustaining family-school partnerships. For example, P1 explained:

We are the voices for our children who are too little to tell us that it's too hard, or you know, I don't understand. I need to make sure that the teachers, or the principal, or the administration know his needs.

Parent participants also appeared to perceive their role as one that works together with the school to achieve a common goal for the students. This is exemplified by P3 who stated, "We should all be working for the same goal - for these kids to get the education they deserve and that they need." Although working together with the school appeared to be a key role identified by all of the parent participants, before utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework, many indicated that they were unaware of potential opportunities to enact this role, as P4 explained, "I have things that I could do, and I'd be happy to help, but, you know, I don't know the needs of the classroom." P2 also explained:

I know a lot of the parents that I know are just like, “well how do you get involved. I know you can join the PTA, but you know, what about outside of that?” We don’t know how they want us to be involved. What do they need for us to do?

Parent participants also identified their perceptions of the role of the school (teachers and administrators) in establishing and maintaining effective home-school partnerships. Before the utilization of the Dual-Capacity Building Framework, parent participants overwhelmingly indicated that the role of the school is to create an environment where parents felt welcomed and invited. P2 identified “feeling welcome” to be critical for engaging her in involvement efforts, as she explained the role of teacher in establishing and maintaining effective partnerships between the school and families:

Just making sure that the parents understand that they are welcome to their [teacher’s] classroom...I think that’s really important from the teacher perspective because as a parent, if I don’t feel that you’re inviting or welcoming or even, you know, want my help, then I may tend to not be as involved.

P3 also discussed the important role that feeling welcomed and invited plays in building and maintaining partnerships, as she explained:

It really comes from the teachers and administrators just having that open door, “Come in and volunteer whatever time you can.” And also being approachable. You can totally feel when they [teachers and administrators] are unapproachable. We have to feel like they are just like one of us – like they are parents and have children too; like they are willing to engage with us.

P4 explains how a welcoming atmosphere can have the potential to overcome barriers as she explained, “Sometimes I get into the school and I don’t know where to go, or what to do;

everything seems like very rigid business. A welcoming atmosphere would encourage parents to not feel so nervous.”

After utilization of the Dual-Capacity Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships, the perception of parent participants’ own role continued to maintain a sense of advocacy for their children, however the rhetoric from many parent participants changed to include an aspect of empowerment – encouraging parents to reach out to the school. For example, P3 explained, “We [parents] need to speak out. We have to change that mindset. If your child has an issue, go in and have a conversation with the teacher.” P1 also expressed a similar sentiment when she stated, “If you are concerned that you don’t know the principal or how they’re running the school, then to me, as a parent, you need to take that extra step and reach out.”

Parents’ perceptions of the school’s role changed significantly over the course of the study, as after utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework, all parents overwhelmingly indicated that the school’s role is to provide opportunities for parents to offer their voice in a nonjudgmental environment. P2 discussed this concept:

The school should provide a town hall forum where people can lay out certain concerns or certain things that maybe they’d like to see. A lot of people have ideas but have never been asked to kind of throw them out there and engage in a true dialogue – not just them just telling us or us just telling them... We need a format where we can ask those questions without feeling like, “I’m the only person in this school that doesn’t know.”

P4 also expressed a need for the school to provide an atmosphere conducive to orchestrating an open dialogue, as she stated:

I think they [school administrators] need to provide a kind of forum for getting the two partners together and moderate that...where there could be a group of parents and teachers that are all working on the same thing with their student and child...so you don't feel bad about any of it because you're not alone and you're not the only one.

Teacher and Administrator Participants

Similar to parent participants, before utilization of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework, teacher and administrator participants also indicated that one aspect of their own role is to ensure families feel welcomed, invited, and that there is an open-door policy where parents feel comfortable. For example, Ad2 stated, "Us as administrators know that this is a welcome place; hopefully our parents do feel that way, we want them to feel that way and we try really hard to communicate, and to build those relationships." T6 expressed similar thoughts on building relationships with parents, explaining, "They [teachers] should introduce themselves as soon as possible. I don't think parents should come to conferences and go, 'Oh this is the first time I've met you' – they need to foster that relationship right from the beginning."

Additionally, all teacher participants indicated their role is to communicate with families as well. For example, T1 stated:

Teachers should have a website for parents to go on, where they can see the homework or activities that children are engaged and involved in. There should be some kind of newsletter once a month or once a quarter...just lots of information about what's going on in the building.

T4 expressed similar ideas on the role of teachers, as she explained, "[teachers] keep the lines of communication open and reach out, especially to those parents that you don't necessarily see a

lot or hear from a lot...keeping them up to date on their child and letting them know the school functions.”

Contrary to parent’s perceptions of their own roles, before utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework, many teacher and administrator participants described a parent’s role in a very traditional and school-centric manner. For example, when asked what parental involvement means, T6 explained, “Parents being visible in the school; coming in, helping out, volunteering, and coming to after school functions.” T5 also expressed, “Parental involvement would be someone who is willing to come into the classroom to help. Parental involvement would also be attending activities that are at school.” When asked the ways in which parents are currently involved, Ad1 stated, “They [parents] come in and they help, but we haven’t built a lot of opportunity. It’s all in our PTA and surface level things.” When asked what a school that truly embraced partnerships would look like, T2 explained, “You’d see them [parents] in the hallways, you’d see them taking part in different activities, you would see parents knowing other students on a first name basis.”

After utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework, teacher and administrators’ perceptions of their own roles changed significantly, as all participants expressed the importance of the school seeking parent voice, providing an outlet for parent input, and valuing parent contribution by providing an environment conducive to open dialogue. For example, Ad1 explained her changed perceptions of a partnership between the school and family, stating:

It’s something beyond coming to events. It is truly engaging the parents in a conversation about learning... and us giving them a voice in their students’ education – us giving them that voice will give us a voice in their home. It’s like a two-way street, and I’m understanding, it’s not just about us bringing them in and telling, like tell you, tell you,

tell you...it's about engaging them so they find value in what we have to say because they know that we care 100% not just about their child, but about their home.

T3 also expressed her reflections on the school's role by explaining, "I think as school we are right at the entry level, I see that we need to change our culture to ensure parents feel welcome. We need to let them know that their family is important to us." T6 expressed similar sentiments, "Right now we don't have that trust. Open communication and trust are key because if there is not open communication nobody's going to say anything, and if there's not trust then they [parents] won't want to bring up their ideas."

While teacher and administrator participants continued to indicate their role as one that communicates with families, both administrators and many teacher participants also expressed the need for varied communication. For example, Ad2 stated, "the school could really connect with parents through letters, through emails, through parent contact – being more consistent with that; making sure we're doing the positives as well as the constructives." T5 also discussed the ways in which teachers communicate with parents, as she expressed:

I feel like I do communicate with my parents, but it's more in the ways that I communicate with them – do more positive communication...I feel like I should be better at just sending that note of, "this is what your kid did towards their goal today", because you definitely talk to some parents more than others.

After utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework, many teacher participants also discussed the importance of leadership in establishing and maintaining home-school partnerships, as well as indicating an administrator's role is to be visible and accessible for families. For example, T3 stated:

I can talk about the importance of establishing partnerships with families all I want, but somewhere it goes back to the administrator's role. The administrator is going to have to get that so that every teacher is doing it, and we don't talk about it enough at all of our meetings. So they need to make it part of our agenda. It has to filtrate through our whole school, otherwise it just won't work with one or two teachers.

T7 also expressed similar sentiments as she explained:

We're not even coming close to talking about and touching on building partnerships as a staff in our building...I think it needs to be something that we do set aside time for, maybe if we need another committee that's coming up with ideas or suggestions, then that's what we need to do and that comes from administration. Also the visibility of them... I know one of them always tries to be here for a function if it's after school, but there's definitely times when they are not and I know I'm disappointed as a staff member, so I can only imagine as a parent, if I'm coming in and not seeing an administrator. I would feel that might kind of turn them off too.

T2 also discussed the visibility and accessibility of administrators, "Administrators need to be more visual. Going out and talking to parents... when parents are dropping off their kids, 'hey, how you doing? Do you have any questions?' I think that would be a great start."

Summary

Participants' perceptions of their own and others' roles and relationships, changed in a variety of ways over the course of the study. Many changes to perceptions highlighted areas of the school's culture and climate, as well as the communication among all stakeholders. After utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships, both teacher and administrator participants expressed the importance of establishing a welcoming and inviting

atmosphere – valuing parent voice and contribution by engaging in open dialogue. Parent participants also expressed their desire for the school to construct an environment conducive to such efforts by bringing together all stakeholders in a nonjudgmental and accepting atmosphere.

Examine Beliefs and Practices

Sub-Question B: How do the assumptions, beliefs, behaviors, and goals of the parents, teachers, and school administrators evolve as a result of utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships?

Opportunities for Involvement

After utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships, several participants appeared to reflect on the current opportunities available for parents to become involved with the school community and expressed a desire for more variable opportunities. For example, P1 stated:

I'm kind of sad to see in some areas we're getting a little flier saying all the PTA activities coming up, but what else? What's going on at the school? Maybe there's something they can do for parents who work at nights, that could come in at 8:00, but can't come at 4:00. I think as a school they need to explore other options.

P4 also expressed a desire for more opportunities, she stated, "Sometimes I don't feel like I can do a...like I can't do a consistent every week help. I wish there were more little opportunities, little events to be part of their [students'] day."

T4 echoed similar sentiments for variability, as she stated, "We need a variety of ways that parents can be involved, so we can reach all types of parents. So if they have jobs or stay at home...they can find something that they like and they want to participate in."

T5 indicated that the current lack of variable opportunities could be a possible barrier for parents looking for opportunities, as she explained:

I'm sure some parents have a perception that if they attend those things, they're going to be given a job, or, you know, they may not want a job. Maybe they just want to come and give their input or maybe help with some things...then all of a sudden you're always the one that's always having to take on a job or a task. You know, sometimes you just want to go to support.

Additionally, as a result of utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework, some teacher participants began to consider opportunities for parents to be involved outside for the school community. For example, T2 stated:

Just the idea of getting into the community...I think that's been really really helpful. You know, sometimes you don't always realize that they [parents] have those negative experiences and they may be worried about coming in...so it's kind of influenced me to think about things like how can I go into the community instead of expecting them to come to me... I think we need to go into the community and find ways to bring our message to them instead of expecting them to come to us and listen.

T3 expressed similar feelings as she explained:

I like the idea of not always having everything being at our school; going out into the community. So then we're somewhat displaced and maybe looked at differently, or not as, this is our home. You know what I mean? More on even ground. I think that would help.

Unity and Community

After utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships, several participants expressed the need for all stakeholders to work together as an essential component to establishing and sustaining effective partnerships between the families and the school. For example, P3 said, “It [the framework] definitely changed the way I see it. I see it now that we all have to put in our part. It’s not just one side or the other. It’s everyone working together.” T1 also reiterated the idea of working together as the basis for partnerships, as she explained, “In order to have a partnership, we all do need to work together...parents, teachers, and administrators have to work together to have a cohesive building.”

Finding a common goal amongst all stakeholders was also recognized as an essential component of developing home-school partnerships. This sentiment was expressed by P2 when she explained:

I think the key component is the common ground which is our children; the love for our children. I think if we can find common ground, we can always partner because we know it’s about the kids. I also think we both have to hold each other accountable...so whatever that looks like, we do that because we understand the common ground, the love we have for our children, and the mutual respect we hold for each other.

P4 also expressed similar sentiments, as she stated, “Each party has to work together...work together and kind of hold each other accountable. Everyone has to come together for the success of the children.”

Parent Involvement = Visible Parents

Before utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework, many teachers, administrators and some parent participants expressed a desire to have more families in attendance at school events and activities. For examples, P3 explains, “Trying to get volunteers has been like pulling

teeth. Everybody's too busy. Like you're talking to the busiest person in the world, all right, so I don't think so." Furthermore, several participants indicated that parents who were not in attendance for these school functions were making excuses and multiple comments showing judgment for this behavior was expressed. For example, T7 stated, "Parents will come for things that are fun, but not for learning." Ad2 explained, "They come because they get a free book and some juice." Also, P1 said, "You cannot find one hour, but you can go get your hair done, your nails done, your car detailed...all of the excuses that these families can come up with..."

After utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework, however, the importance of the visibility of families in the school continued to be a sentiment expressed by many participants. For example, P2 explained:

I really think that parents need to be visible. People always say, "I'm involved in my child's school because I help them with their homework." I really think we could get much further if parents were more visible... I think once teachers or administrators know who you are, they're familiar and they feel like you're accessible.

T6 expressed a similar sentiment, stating:

Like, they didn't come to conferences. I just...I just don't know, as a parent, how you don't do that kind of stuff... I just want them to come to things. To see them, not just once a year, to see them constantly...at my daughter's school, they all, all of the teachers know my youngest daughter's name.

T1 also discussed parent participation at conferences, explaining:

We just had parent-teacher conferences and you never see those parents that you need to see – students that are having difficulties or, you know, that you really want to say, "Can

we partner a little bit more to make sure they are reading at night?”... Just making sure those parents are on board and being able to get some face time with those parents...

T4 described the need to create incentives for parents to attend events, as she stated:

Some type of like incentive to get the parents to come to at least one thing and keep track of it...and if you come to so many, you get this or something for the family. I wish we could do something like that.

There were, however, three participants that expressed vastly contrasting views. These participants discussed their beliefs accepting all families with an understanding that the type of involvement varies from family to family. For example, when asked about the role of parents T3 explained, “Their role should be whatever they are comfortable with...whatever level they are comfortable with and I should be...I should welcome that. And I think it can grow from there.”

T2 also expressed:

I think all parents want to be involved. I don't think there's anyone that doesn't want to... We need to be able to communicate with parents, but in order for the communication to be successful we need to understand that everyone is different; everyone's situation, and when you understand that then you're more likely to consider the problems they may have or roadblocks or obstacles that may stop them.

Ad 1 expressed similar sentiments as well, when asked about the role of parents. She stated:

I'm not sure it's about what the parents could do differently as much as it's about what can we do differently. So the only thing I would ask of parents is to give us their voice...what are their needs and how can we meet them...No parent in the world doesn't want the best for their kid...Yet I don't know that my actions have always aligned with that belief, which is interesting...It's a shift for me because I've always kind of been like,

“yeah, you know, they don’t show up, this and that…” Like now, I’m more like, how can we reach out.

Summary

The behaviors, beliefs, and goals of the participants evolved in a variety of ways as a result of utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships. Participants appeared to reflect on their beliefs, as well as consider the school’s current practices for establishing mutually beneficial home-school partnerships. For instance, participants expressed a goal of creating increased variability in the opportunities available for parents to become involved with the school community. Participants also indicated that all stakeholders must work together in order to establish and sustain effective home-school partnerships. Interestingly, however, the assumption that parental involvement equates to parental visibility did not evolve for many participants. Many teachers and one parent participant continued to express the importance of generating increased parent participation in more traditional forms of involvement, such as parents volunteering and attending school functions and activities.

Create a Space for Building Knowledge and Awareness

Sub-Question C: How do participants view the role of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships in supporting their work to build a family literacy program?

What is helpful? What is not? What is missing?

Critical Conversations

Many participants credit the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships as integral to beginning conversations about parental involvement and developing home-school partnerships. Participants overwhelmingly indicated that they had never participated in these conversations previously at this school. For example, when asked her view

of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework, P1 said, “I think it was extremely helpful because we had people around the table at the collaborative meetings that haven’t normally been engaged.”

P3 expressed similar sentiments, “Everything was helpful... we were all there, the parents, the staff, and the administration. Everybody was together and we’re all going to step up to the plate.”

Ad 1 also discussed the opportunity created by utilizing the framework, as she stated:

The framework gave us the opportunity... and a way for us to begin the conversations about it [home-school partnerships] ... For the three years I’ve been here we’ve never truly talked about it. And we’ve never cared to ask the parents. We didn’t say that, but that’s how we were acting. So, you know, to really get the parents in gave us a direction, so now we can start to make sure our perspectives are more aligned.

T1 echoed the sentiment of awareness of differing perspectives brought to light from utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework, as she explained:

This is only my second year here, but just listening to the different perspectives from the parents and the teachers’ point of view...to see how parents view the school and the atmosphere, and how teachers view the atmosphere, and just to see that disconnect was eye-opening.

T7 also stated, “It seemed like we touched on a couple of different components, but there’s a lot more conversation and depth behind each of those components... I think it was eye-opening to see that we’re not doing these things.”

An Awareness of Research

Several participants indicated that utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework provided them with information, which was previously unknown, about the research on parental engagement and home-school partnerships. For example, P2 described the framework as, “very

informative.” She also added, “it kind of gave me the research about the why behind where there are gaps or why there would be certain concerns in certain areas.” P4 echoed this sentiment, as she described the framework, stating, “I think it’s helpful... It was fascinating hearing the research on just how much the partnership between home and school really does make a difference in a child’s life and their success in school.” When asked her view on the framework, Ad1 explained, “I think it’s great.” She further added, “the bottom line comes down to the outcomes for our kids, and the research supports that all of it affects the outcomes.”

A Roadmap – Where to Start

Although all participants indicated the Dual Capacity-Building Framework to be helpful and informative, participants overwhelmingly indicated that they would have liked to have been provided a roadmap or more direction on where to start. For example, when asked if anything was missing from the Dual Capacity-Building Framework, Ad 1 said, “I think, how do we start the process when we’ve already created a system of disengaged parents? How do we engage the disengaged? That is the piece I’m still wondering.” P3 expressed similar feelings, stating, “How do we carry it out? I know there’s not an easy solution for that, but yeah, how could we start this. Like we didn’t create an action plan, so now what’s supposed to happen? What is the next step?” T3 echoed these feelings when asked her view of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework as she stated, “I think it has a lot of value to it. The only part that I’d say that I don’t really know is how we’d go about getting all teachers on board.” Similar to T3, P2 also appeared to desire a more personalized roadmap. P2 explained:

What I would want to know is how it would apply to me. Like how could I look at this and say what I could do or where I could start...maybe, you know, what are the action

steps so I can walk away with like how can I really, step-by-step go about maybe tackling some of the challenges or some of the things that I may not be doing as a parent.

Summary

Participants viewed the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships as supportive of their efforts to build a family literacy program in two key areas. First, participants indicated that utilization the framework created the space to begin to have critical conversations about parental involvement with representatives from all stakeholders. Second, utilizing the framework brought awareness to the current research around parental engagement. Additionally, participants overwhelmingly expressed a desire for the framework to provide next steps, as many participants indicated they were left with wondering where to start and how the framework can be implemented in the school.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the findings of the study which examined how one school utilized the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships to support their efforts in building a family literacy program. The interplay among all stakeholders (parents, teachers, and school administrators) was also closely examined, as all parties worked together to build a partnership program. Analysis of multiple sources of data revealed three major themes:

1. Examine culture, climate, and communication
2. Examine beliefs and practices
3. Create a space for building knowledge and awareness

In the final chapter, a detailed discussion of the findings and conclusions from the study are presented. I will also discuss how the findings relate to relevant literature and offer recommendations for key stakeholders as well as recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

“The way schools care about children is reflected in the way schools care about the children’s families.” – Dr. Joyce Epstein

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings and the implications of this study. I first present a summary of the study. This summary includes a description of the context, problem, as well as the purpose of this study. Next, a discussion of the findings is presented; organized by each major theme and the research sub-question represented within it. Relevant literature is also connected to the findings where appropriate. Finally, I offer implications for all stakeholders, as well as limitations and recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Study

Decades of research on parental involvement strongly suggests that students are most successful when they have supportive and actively engaged families (e.g. Barnard, 2004; Englund, Luckner, Whaley, & Egeland, 2004; Epstein, 1986; Fan & Chen, 1999; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Izzo, Weissberg, Kaspro, & Fendrich, 1999; Jeynes, 2003, 2005). This wealth of research exemplifies the variable roles that families play in the education of children. Specifically, a child’s family plays a significant role in the following: (a) support of academic achievement, (b) ability to motivate and inspire a child’s determination to succeed, (c) a child’s beliefs and values about education, and (d) decreasing dropout rates by encouraging regular school attendance (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2003, 2005). Perhaps, the most significant aspect, is that this relationship between parental involvement and student achievement is found to be consistent with families of all economic, racial/ethnic, and educational backgrounds, as well as for students at all ages (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). The research and

scholarship on literacy development and attainment has also recognized the crucial role of the family and has clearly demonstrated the home environment to be a prolific site for early literacy and language development (Hart & Risley, 1995; Heath, 1983; Neuman, 2006; Purcell-Gates, 1995; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988).

Therefore, policy makers have attempted to tap into the resource of families. Historically, efforts have been focused on utilizing families as a possible solution to narrow the achievement gap. The Elementary and Secondary Educational Act (ESEA) Title 1 program is one such example, as the law requires schools to have parental involvement policies in place to help meet the needs of low achieving students in high poverty areas (Mapp, 2012).

Although there are many references to parental involvement in various educational policy mandates, the bulk of the task remains on the shoulders of school districts, school administrators, classroom teachers, and other school personnel, as they are charged with transforming their buildings into places that are conducive to establishing and sustaining effective home-school partnerships. For many schools, this transformation requires a critical examination and confrontation of a variety of complex issues, often involving beliefs about race, class, and various ideologies. Furthermore, many teachers and administrators leave education preparation programs without any, or very little, content relating to family and community relations (Epstein, Sanders, & Clark, 1999; Hess & Kelly, 2005). Therefore, without the knowledge, skills, and sometimes even belief systems to establish and maintain effective home-school partnerships, random and unrelated parental involvement activities proliferate and fail to cultivate into the effective partnerships that lead to increased educational outcomes for all children.

Thus, it is essential that all school personnel learn know how to engage all families of varying racial, socioeconomic, linguistic, cultural and academic backgrounds in order to create effective, equitable, and sustainable partnerships. Utilizing a framework, such as the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships may assist schools with accomplishing this task. The Dual Capacity-Building Framework serves as a national model for developing effective partnerships between the family, school, and the community by supporting schools to design partnership initiatives that work towards building capacity among educators and families around student success (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013).

The Dual-Capacity Framework consists of four components: the first describes the challenges to capacity that must be addressed; the next component articulates the conditions that are necessary to create successful home-school partnerships; the third component identifies the anticipated capacity goals that are infused in all parental engagement policies and programs; and the final component describes the capacity-building outcomes for school staff, as well as, families (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013).

The purpose of this study was to examine how the implementation of The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships achieves its intended results, as one elementary school utilized this framework to assist in building a family literacy program. The interplay among all stakeholders (parents, teachers, and school administrators) was also closely examined, as all parties worked together to build a partnership program.

The following central question guided this study:

1. How does one elementary school utilize the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships to support their efforts in building a family literacy program?

The following sub-questions framed this investigation:

- a) How do the participants' perceptions of their own and others' roles and relationships change over the course of the study?
- b) How do the assumptions, beliefs, behaviors, and goals of the parents, teachers, and school administrators evolve as a result of utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships?
- c) How do participants view the role of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships in supporting their work to build a family literacy program? What is helpful? What is not? What is missing?

Discussion of the Findings

The overarching research question asked: *How does one elementary school utilize the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships to support their efforts in building a family literacy program?* Three major themes emerged from the data, indicating that the participants at the elementary school in this study utilized the framework to: (a) examine the school's culture, climate, and communication, (b) examine beliefs and practices, and (c) create a space for building knowledge and awareness. This section is organized by each theme and the research sub-questions represented within it.

Examine Culture, Climate, and Communication

Sub-Question A: How do the participants' perceptions of their own and others' roles and relationships change over the course of the study?

Over the course of this study, all participants' perceptions of their own and others' roles and relationships changed in a variety of ways. Many of these changes were centered around the school's culture, climate, and communication. For example, after parent participants utilized the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships, they appeared to realize that there have been very few, if any, opportunities available within the school for parents to give their opinion and provide their voice. For example, there are only teacher representatives on the home-school committee. This led to a significant change in the parent participants' perceptions of the school's role in establishing and sustaining home-school partnerships, as they overwhelmingly expressed their desire for the school to provide opportunities for parents to offer their voice in a nonjudgmental environment. This finding is consistent with the research examining why parents become involved. For instance, Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) and Hoover-Dempsey and Whitaker (2010) both found that parents are more motivated to become engaged and involved when they perceive the school as offering manageable opportunities that clearly convey that the school *desires* and *values* input from parents. Similarly, in the book, *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships*, the authors indicate that "sharing power" is an essential component of developing partnerships with families, as they explain, "Giving families a voice in decisions and real jobs to do are convincing signals that the school recognizes and values parents" (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007, p. 56).

Teacher and Administrator participants also appeared to reflect on the school's culture and climate after utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships. Similar to parent participants, many teacher and administrator participants also appeared to recognize the importance of seeking parent voice, providing an outlet for parent input, and valuing parent contribution as aspects of their own role in establishing and sustaining

home-school partnerships. Again, at the time of this study, there were only teachers represented on home-school committee, so there were not any identified outlets for parents to contribute to the school community on a regular basis. The significance of educators valuing shared decision making and responsibility is demonstrated in a study conducted by Nistler and Maiers (2000). In this study, a family literacy program was created with parent input from the onset. For example, parents shared in the decision making on meeting dates and times, as well as the types of activities planned (Nistler & Maiers, 2000). These efforts appeared to pay off as, 96.5% of parents participated in year one and 94.5% participated in year two, despite this program taking place in an urban, low-income school with an 85% mobility rate (Nistler & Maiers, 2000). This study is an illustration of the crucial role of parent input and shared power in establishing and sustaining effective home-school partnerships.

Many teacher and administrator participants appeared to recognize that the manner in which they have been communicating with parents has not been conducive to establishing trusting relationships and creating a welcoming atmosphere. Therefore, many teacher and parent participants changed their perceptions of their own role to include varying the manner and content of communication with families. Research supports consistent two-way communication as a key component to establishing and sustaining effective home-school partnerships. For example, in the book, *Engage Every Family: Five Simple Principles*, the author identifies effective communication and building relationships as one the core principles of engaging families. The author explains, “There is consistent evidence that effective communication and relationship building creates environments in the schools that are welcoming, respectful, and conducive to family engagement” (Constantino, 2016, p. 80).

Teacher participants also appeared to reflect on the role of the administrators in establishing and sustaining effective home-school partnerships. Many teacher participants indicated that they felt the administrators at this school have not established clear expectations for the staff with regards to family engagement. Therefore, all teacher participants' perceptions about the role of administrators changed to include this critical aspect. The research on creating and sustaining effective home-school partnerships underscores the critical role of leadership as well. For example, Constantino (2016) found that principals and building leaders who were supportive and purposefully encouraged engagement with every family, saw better, more consistent, and measureable results. Michele Brooks, former superintendent of family and student engagement for Boston Public Schools, echoes this sentiment. She explains, "Leaders with core beliefs around family engagement can articulate its value, ensure staff embraces its significance, and create an environment for it to flourish alongside instructional practice" (Brooks, 2016, p. 1).

In summary, parent, teacher, and administrator perceptions of their own and others' roles and relationships changed in a variety of ways over the course of the study. The most significant changes to these perceptions appeared to come as a result of reflecting on the school's culture, climate, and communication after utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships. One of the five process conditions explained in the framework identifies relationship building as a major focus of every initiative (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Mapp and Kuttner (2013) explain, "No meaningful family engagement can be established until relationships of trust and respect are established between home and school" (p. 9). Due to this component of the framework, participants appeared to realize that opportunities to communicate and establish respectful and trusting relationships between this school and families it serves, are

lacking, and in many cases nonexistent. Changes to participants' perceptions of their own and others' roles are consistent with the research and scholarship on parental involvement that identifies the essential components to developing and sustaining effective partnerships between the school and families.

Examine Beliefs and Practices

Sub-Question B: How do the assumptions, beliefs, behaviors, and goals of the parents, teachers, and school administrators evolve as a result of utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships?

The beliefs, behaviors, and goals of the participants evolved in significant ways as a result of utilizing the Dual-Capacity Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships. For example, after utilizing the framework, participants appeared to consider the school's current family engagement practices and policies. Many participants expressed the desire for more variable opportunities for parents to become involved in the school community. Many teacher and parent participants indicated that current opportunities for involvement do not support the variety of ways that parents might become actively involved in their child's education and do not reflect the diversity of familial circumstances. Creating increased variability in the opportunities available for parents became a new goal for many participants. This goal is consistent with the research on creating and sustaining effective home-school partnerships. When explaining how schools can create access to engagement for families in poverty, Varlas (2015) advises educators to reflect on their engagement efforts – examining if they are designed around the way educators experienced school, or are educators' truly designing experiences with consideration to what the community truly values? Furthermore, when examining factors for parent involvement, Hoover-Dempsey and Whitaker (2010) identified parents as more motivated to become involved when

they perceive the school as being responsive to specific familial circumstances, such as financial concerns or work constraints. Therefore, offering a variety of opportunities that are flexible and reflect the varied circumstances of families is an essential component of establishing and sustaining effective home-school partnerships.

Parent and teacher participants also indicated that their beliefs about the roles of all stakeholders in establishing and sustaining effective home-school partnerships evolved as a result of utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships. For example, several parent and teacher participants explained the need for all stakeholders to work together. This is exemplified in the statement made by P3, “It [the framework] definitely changed the way I see it. I see it now that we all have to put in our part. It’s not just one side or the other. It’s everyone working together”. One of the process conditions integral to the success of establishing home-school partnerships presented in Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships, was for staff and families to engage in opportunities that empower them to reflect on their roles (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). This developmental condition explains that any initiative must set out to empower and enable both families and school staff to be knowledgeable and informed stakeholders (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). The presentation of the framework appeared to support the ways many teacher and parent participants evolved in their beliefs about their own and others roles in establishing and sustaining home-school partnerships.

After utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships, the importance of the visibility of parents continued to be expressed by many participants. Although traditional displays of parental engagement have not been shown to have the greatest impact on students’ academic achievement, many teachers, administrators, and other school staff continue to attribute actions, such as volunteering and attending school functions and events, as

indications of parental engagement (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Fan & Chen, 2001; Gillanders et al., 2012; Jeynes, 2003, 2005). The sentiments expressed by many of the participants in this study appear to corroborate these findings. Interestingly, however, there were three participants (2 teachers and 1 administrator) that expressed vastly contrasting views. These three participants appear to have embodied the first two core beliefs essential to cultivating and sustaining partnerships with families as described by Henderson et al. (2007) in the book, *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships*. The authors identify four core beliefs that must permeate all aspects of the school culture and environment in order for effective home-school partnerships to succeed: 1. All families want their children to succeed in school and in life. 2. All families have the ability and capacity to support their children’s learning, however, the level and nature of this support will vary from family to family. 3. Parents and the school staff are equal partners – parents voice and advocacy should be encouraged. 4. The primary responsibility for building home-school partnerships rests with the school staff, especially school leaders (Henderson et al., 2007). The authors further indicate that the first core belief functions as the foundation for establishing meaningful partnerships with families, and is therefore the most important. (Henderson et al., 2007). Constantino (2016) echoes this sentiment as he explains, “If you do not honor all families and convey true appreciation for what they can bring to the partnership, regardless of their station in life, then those families will see through your efforts to engage them through a lens of skepticism” (p. 87).

The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships addresses the notion of core beliefs very briefly. When discussing the importance of building and enhancing the capacity of staff and families, Mapp and Kuttner (2013) explain, “Staff need to be committed to working as partners with families and must believe in the value of such partnerships for

improving student learning” (p. 11). However, this is the only sentence that alludes to the notion of core beliefs. The three participants that appeared to truly embody these core beliefs seem to have experienced a confrontation between their beliefs and actions. For example, Ad1 said,

When we started talking about it more deeply, and you know, I just go back to... no parent in the world doesn't want the best for their kid. Yet, I don't know that my actions, or like thoughts or statements haven't always aligned with that belief, which is interesting. Because if you would have asked me, I would say, “of course they want the best”. But my beliefs or my actions aren't lining up to that.

The other participants did not seem to experience this confrontation. Although many of the participants expressed a strong belief in the value of establishing mutually beneficial partnerships between the home and the school, they also continued to express views aligning with a deficit mindset. For example, T1 said, “We just had parent teacher conferences, you know, you get more parents the first round then you do the second round, and you never get to see those parents that you need to see; the students that are having difficulties...” Similarly, T6 stated, “They didn't come to the conferences, I just...I just don't know as a parent, I don't know how you don't do that kind of stuff.” There wasn't an opportunity to truly confront and deconstruct these statements in this study. Therefore, many participants continued to make judgmental statements when parents didn't appear to conform to the standards that are traditionally indicative of parental involvement (i.e. being visible by attending school functions/events, parent-teacher conferences, etc...), despite expressing a value for creating and sustaining these partnerships. The statement expressed by P2 corroborates this sentiment, as she explains the need for parents to be visible in order to “get much further”; seeming as if parents need to conform to traditional standards of parental involvement in order to be seen as credible. P2 stated:

I really think that parents need to be visible. People always say, “I’m involved in my child’s school because I help them with their homework.” I really think we could get much further if parents were more visible.

At the core of these statements is a deficit view, which is the very antithesis of establishing and sustaining effective partnerships with families. This went unrecognized by many participants.

In summary, the assumptions, beliefs, behaviors, and goals of the parents, teachers, and school administrators evolved in a variety of ways as a result of utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships. Many participants appeared to reflect on the school’s current practices and policies of engagement, however, only three participants appeared to truly examine their own beliefs as well as other stakeholder’s roles in establishing and sustaining mutually beneficial home-school partnerships. The scope and timeframe of this study did not allow for a deconstruction and deep examination into the beliefs of all participants, and therefore many participants continued to hold onto the importance of traditional displays of parental involvement. The beliefs and practices expressed by the many of the participants are consistent with the research and scholarship on creating and sustaining effective home-school partnerships.

Create a Space for Building Knowledge and Awareness

Sub-Question C: How do participants view the role of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships in supporting their work to build a family literacy program?

What is helpful? What is not? What is missing?

Participants overwhelmingly viewed the framework as supportive of their efforts to build a family literacy program. First, participants indicated that the framework was supportive of their efforts by creating a space to engage in critical conversations about parental engagement with

representatives from all stakeholders. Many participants appeared to view these initial conversations as critical to establishing the foundation of their family engagement initiative. This sentiment is echoed throughout the research on parental engagement as an essential first step to starting any partnership initiative. For example, Edwards (2010), explains, “Before launching any program, first consult with a group of parents to identify the needs of the children and their families” (p. 18). Constantino (2016) concurs, explaining “When a decision is made to undertake a course to engage every family or increase family engagement, a critical first step is to gauge where everyone is on the subject” (p. 11).

Next, several participants indicated that utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships brought an awareness to the research on parental engagement and home-school partnerships. The Dual Capacity-Building Framework was designed based upon the research on effective family engagement and home-school partnership strategies (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Additionally, the authors of the framework attribute the lack of sustained opportunities to build capacity as one of the major factors contributing to the implementation of random, unrelated, and ineffective engagement activities that continue to occur in many schools around the country (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Therefore, participant awareness of the research surrounding the creation and sustainment of effective home-school partnerships appears to be a natural consequence of utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework.

Although many participants indicated that utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework was helpful and informative, all participants overwhelmingly expressed a desire for more direction. This finding is consistent with the research and scholarship on home-school partnerships. Research demonstrates that many teachers, administrators, and other school staff believe that engaging families is merely a matter of implementing easy to follow steps, or a

checklist of strategies they can utilize to engage families (Mapp & Hong, 2010; Lightfoot, 2004; Varlas, 2015). In contrast, Constantino (2016) describes family engagement as, “a commitment to change school culture and, as such, is ongoing and never-ending” (p. 9).

In summary, the participants viewed the Dual Capacity-Building Framework as supportive of their efforts to build a family literacy program by providing a space for building knowledge and awareness. The participants began to build an awareness of the perceptions of the parent, teacher, and administrative participants by engaging in critical conversations with representatives from all stakeholders. Additionally, participants began to build knowledge on the research surrounding effective home-school partnerships. Interestingly, however, participants appeared to desire a more specific direction, or an action plan, specific to their personal context. This finding is consistent with the research on the establishment of effective home-school partnerships.

Implications of the Study

There are several implications of this study for each stakeholder participant – parents, teachers, and school administrators. It is essential for these stakeholders to understand effective strategies which highlight the ways in which educators and families can partner with one another to support increased educational outcomes for all children. This section outlines the implications for each stakeholder.

Parents

It is essential for parents to know and understand the power and influence they have on their child’s learning. Several parent participants in this study expressed how fascinating it was to hear how partnering with the school truly makes a difference in a child’s success in school. Belief in the power to have an effect is called “efficacy”. Research has demonstrated that parents

with a high sense of efficacy, who believe that their efforts will have a positive impact, are more likely to be involved in school and persist in parental engagement despite various challenges or obstacles they may face (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Shumow & Lomax, 2002). A notable attribute of parental efficacy is that it is socially constructed and subject to the influences of teachers, school leaders, as well as family members and other social groups. All but one parent participant in this study was an active member of the school's PTA (Parent Teacher Association). Based on the findings from this study, it would be beneficial for this school's PTA to create a "parent buddy program" that pairs new or incoming families with one or two other families. By creating this program, parents can be a resource for other parents to assist in gaining parental efficacy. Sheldon (2002) found that parents who participated in social networks gained valuable resources which contributed to their level of parental involvement at home and at school.

The National PTA has a long history of advocacy on a variety of educational issues, however many local PTA groups tend to shy away from shared decision making and advocacy within their schools (Henderson et al., 2007). Based on the findings in this study, it would benefit this school's PTA to take on a leadership role and become more involved in presenting parent voice and input in school improvement efforts. Henderson et al. (2007) provides several suggestions for local PTAs to move from a traditional model (focused on fund raising and volunteering) to a leadership model, inclusive of a variety of parents:

- Focus on improving student achievement and helping families understand standards, tests, and performance data
- Varies times and places, such as meeting on weekends in an apartment complex community room

- Plans the agenda based on issues important to parents, using parent surveys
 - Communicates parents' ideas and concerns to principal and school staff
 - Features student work and performances at meetings and activities, and offers translation
 - Invites the whole family and offers food, child care, and help with transportation
 - Presents concrete proposals for improvement to principal and local school board
- (p. 194).

Teachers

The teacher participants in this study overwhelmingly identified communicating with families as a critical aspect of their role in establishing and sustaining home-school partnerships. The research on establishing and sustaining effective home-school partnerships also underpins the crucial role of two-way communication between the school and the families (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). After utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School partnerships, many teacher participants reflected on the ways in which they communicate with parents. Their examples, however, often illustrated one-way communication strategies. For example, teacher participants discussed sending home a weekly newsletter, or using the teacher website to communicate what is happening in the school to parents. These communication strategies leave little, to no opportunity for parents to communicate and engage with teachers. Teachers should employ techniques that provide parents with opportunities to participate in two-way communication. For example, teachers can send an email blast to all parents informing them of the upcoming unit of study and provide examples of how parents can extend their child's learning at home. In addition, teachers then should provide a space on the website for parents to submit questions and/or display

evidence of their child's learning at home by posting or sending pictures or drawings. Whether information is shared through paper, email, website, or by phone the goal is the same – to provide parents with the numerous opportunities to communicate easily and directly with the teacher around student learning.

Communicating effectively with all families, and ensuring that the communication is two-way, is reciprocal with the concept of building trusting relationships with families. Constantino (2016) uses the old adage, “before they will come to you, you must go to them” when discussing the importance of teacher outreach (p. 91). It is essential for teachers to truly believe that reaching out to *all* families has value and is worthy of their time and effort. Reaching out to all families is an essential component of building trusting relationships. One first step could be taking the time at the beginning of the school year to ask families about their interests, their children, and their goals for their children's learning. Following up and maintaining teacher outreach throughout the school year, however, is vital. Continuous communication is necessary to building the relationships needed to foster parental engagement with every family. Teachers cannot expect to build these important relationships simply through parent-teacher conferences. Henderson et al. (2007) explains, “Above all, don't rely on conferences as your school's main contact with families. It's not possible to build constructive working relationships in one or two meetings a year” (p. 64).

Lastly, teachers need to understand the variety of ways in which parents can be engaged in their child's learning. Patricia Edwards coined the term “differentiated parenting” to account for parental differences in terms of their involvement. Edwards (2011) explains:

I proposed the concept of differentiated parenting as a way to urge schools to remember when designing programs for parents that one size does not fit all. While all parents want

their children to succeed in school, their perspectives and abilities affect their capacity to support their children in particular ways (p. 19).

It is essential for teachers to understand this concept and keep an open mind about the variety of ways that families choose to be involved. Ensuring that parents are represented on the home-school committee can assist with acknowledging this notion. Simply because a family does not conform to traditional expectations of parental involvement, does not mean that they do not have the capacity to support their child's learning at home.

Administrators

Building a school atmosphere that is conducive to establishing and sustaining effective home-school partnerships begins with the leadership within the school (Brooks, 2016; Constantino, 2016; Mapp & Hong, 2010). It is essential for administrators to understand that they are the primary drivers for effective family engagement. As previously discussed, the core beliefs essential to successful home-school partnerships *must* permeate all aspects of the school culture and environment. One of the significant findings of this study was that teacher participants overwhelmingly began to consider the importance of leadership after utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships. Additionally, several teacher participants further expressed concern about the minimal time that has been spent discussing parental engagement and developing effective partnerships with families at this school. Several teachers also explained that the administrators at this school have not established clear expectations for the staff with regards to family engagement. These sentiments were further corroborated by the fact that there was not a time when *both* administrators were together with the other participants at the collaboration meetings. Ad 2 attended the first collaboration meeting, and Ad 1 attended the second meeting. From this information, it does not appear that the

administrators at this school have prioritized engaging families and building effective, mutually beneficial partnerships. Consequently, if the leadership does not value or believe that establishing effective partnerships with every family is worthwhile, then even the best engagement strategies will not live up to their potential. Constantino (2016) states, “The ingredients to successfully engage every family are as specific as any favorite recipe. Regardless of how well you implement and evaluate your success, if the support of leadership is missing, the recipe will not turn out as expected” (p. 19). Simply stated, leadership matters.

The success of all family engagement efforts comes down to beliefs – what school administrators, teachers, and other school personnel believe about families and their capacity to support their child’s education as true partners. Because of this fact, if the goal is establishing meaningful and effective home-school partnerships, the first step for administrators is to engage their staff in discussion and reflection on their perceptions and current beliefs. Constantino (2016) advises each individual member of the school answer the following questions when beginning efforts to establish meaningful home-school partnerships:

1. What do you believe about family engagement?
2. Do you believe that every family in your (classroom, team, school, etc.) is engaged with their child’s learning?
3. If the answer to Question 2 is no, why do you think there are families who are not engaged?
4. If every family in your (classroom, team, school, etc.) is not engaged, would you welcome their engagement?
5. What would engaging every family look like to you? (p.12)

The collective beliefs, assumptions, values, and policies within a school must be supportive of engaging *all* families (Constantino, 2016; Henderson et al., 2007; Mapp & Hong, 2010).

Creating a culture and climate conducive for effective home-school partnerships to flourish is critical, and is therefore, the first step in the process.

Family Literacy

It has been recognized that children from culturally diverse and low-income homes enter school with varied experiences with language and literacy – many of them incongruent with the school literacy practices they will come to partake in on a daily basis (Compton-Lilly, 2003; McCarthy, 1997; Purcell-Gates, 1995; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). School based family literacy programs have the potential to be the bridge that connects home and school literacies, however, many school based family literacy initiatives simply attempt to transfer mainstream literacy practices into the homes of students without input from the families they serve (Dudley-Marling, 2009; Frey, 2010; Longwell-Grice & McIntyre, 2006). As illustrated in this study, many teachers and administrators have engrained, and sometimes, subconscious deficit beliefs about the families they serve. In addition, initiatives to involve families in the literacy development of their children often highlight a model of communication that moves one way – from the school to the home; creating policies without regard for the diverse needs of the families they serve. These surface level programs simply talk at families, instead of listening to their needs, and collaborating together. This study demonstrates that these conditions render it virtually impossible for any family literacy program to assist with creating authentic, mutually beneficial partnerships with families.

There are many community-based family literacy programs that have successfully incorporated the conditions that are essential to creating valued partnerships with families,

however, schools (often serving the same communities) are not part of this process. Frey (2010) explains, “Family literacy projects have resulted in important changes in the lives of students and families, but schools remain relatively untouched by the process” (p. 51). Therefore, community-based family literacy programs should establish a partnership with the local schools that are part of the communities that they serve. This collaboration can assist both schools and community-based organizations with establishing and sustaining programs guided by the essential conditions and values shown to create mutually beneficial partnerships and improved educational outcomes for all participants. This partnership program can help schools to:

1. Create initiatives based on the interest and needs of families and children.
2. Recognize and capitalize on the literacy knowledge and practices that are carried out in the daily lives of children and their families.
3. Understand the literacy strengths and history of parents and their children.
4. Provide opportunities for parents, teachers, and administrators to share in dialogue and reflection - where all stakeholders are active contributors to in their own learning.
5. Empower participants and encourage increased parental efficacy.

The above program goals incorporate principles that should guide the implementation of any family literacy program, as well as the essential conditions for establishing and sustaining effective home-school partnerships (Auerbach, 1995; Handel, 1999; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Mapp & Hong, 2010).

Limitations of the Study

Certain features of this case study research presented limitations. Time was a major limitation, beginning with how long it took to simply find participants. In addition, it takes a significant

investment of time to explore a phenomenon to the degree necessary to provide rich and thick descriptions, as well as a detailed understanding of the case. This study was limited by the five-month timeframe in which it took place.

Additionally, it takes time to develop trust. Parents, teachers, and administrators were asked to provide their opinion on a topic that is very complex. I attempted to establish an environment conducive to building a trusting atmosphere, but some of the participants may not have been comfortable enough to share their honest opinions. Another limitation was the small amount of time (2 days) given to establishing an environment where all of the participants were comfortable participating in a discussion and collaborating together. At the collaboration meetings, parent participants may not have been comfortable sharing their opinions with teachers and administrators present. Parents may have felt like their opinions or concerns could be held against them, or their children. This same sentiment can be stated for teacher participants, as one of their administrators was present at each meeting. Teachers may have felt hesitant to share their opinions in fear that their administrators would give them an unfair evaluation. Teachers may have also been uncomfortable sharing their thoughts with parents, especially if they did not have positive opinions about parents with regard to establishing effective home-school partnerships. Due to the context of this situation, this study was limited to the information with which the participants felt comfortable sharing.

Recommendations for Future Research

The results of this study support the need for future process related research examining home-school partnerships. First, I recommend the need for an in-depth, longitudinal research study. This should include data collection over an entire school year. Such a study would add to

the findings of this study and would allow for a clearer picture of how the school utilized the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships. Furthermore, additional clarity on the interplay among all stakeholders could also be developed in a longitudinal research study.

Second, I recommend using a larger sample for the study with representation from a variety of income levels, as well as, racial and ethnically diverse populations. Although 69% of the student population is identified as low income, the communities represented in this school exhibit a large range of income levels. This school services students that live in communities identified traditionally as upper-middle class, as well as students that live in section 8 apartments. Additionally, one parent participant frequently discussed the income differences at this school in both of her interviews. Parents representing a variety of income levels may provide different perspectives, experiences, and findings. Furthermore, the use of a larger participant pool would allow the findings to be more generalizable to other school leaders, teachers, and school personnel around the country.

Third, I recommend exploring the concept of the importance of parental visibility and traditional forms of parental involvement. In this study, many teachers overwhelmingly expressed their desire to “see” parents in the school. These traditional displays of parental involvement appeared to be a form of validation for many of the teacher participants. This sentiment continued to remain consistent after the discussion of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships. These participants did not appear to recognize that many of their statements were judgmental of parents who did not display traditional forms of parental involvement. Further examination into why some participants recognized the disconnect between their beliefs and actions, and many did not, is warranted.

Lastly, I recommend examining how the role of the researcher influences the utilization of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships. In this study, the researcher was viewed as the “expert”. Throughout the planning meetings, several participants asked me to clarify various concepts and research that the framework referenced, which were unfamiliar to them. Therefore, I recommend further research to compare schools that work directly with a researcher or facilitator during the implementation of the framework, to those that utilize the framework on their own. This could provide further clarity about the role of the researcher or facilitator when implementing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships.

Reflection on the Research

Over the course of my career, I’ve had the pleasure of working with a variety of educators in several school districts. Upon reflecting on these experiences, as well as my own personal upbringing, I have come to the conclusion that the topic of parental involvement is complex. All parties (parents, teachers, and administrators) come to the table with a set of beliefs that are largely informed by their own history and experiences. Mining these beliefs is a complex, uncomfortable, but unquestionably necessary process when engaging in the work of establishing effective home-school partnerships. Moreover, the sheer recognition that one holds these beliefs is a process in and of itself, and the significance of this process came as a surprise to me during this research study.

The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships adequately addresses the essential components to establishing effective home-school partnerships as identified by a wealth of family engagement research. This framework is not a list of boxes to “check off”, that once completed, effective partnerships magically occur (Although I suspect that

many participants in this study, as well as many other educators, assume that very notion). The fact is, schools are indeed places that hold deep institutional cultural practices. The examination of this system of beliefs takes a considerable amount of time, but is the necessary first step in the process of establishing effective home-school partnerships.

It is of importance to note that the participants in this study began to engage in these initial steps organically, as they discussed the ideals represented within the framework through the perspectives of all stakeholders, and most importantly, within the context of this school. It was these conversations around the framework that moved this school forward. However, they simply uncovered the tip of the iceberg. These deeply rooted beliefs and practices barely started to become uncovered through the critical conversations that took place at the collaboration meetings. Certainly, these two meetings were not enough to deconstruct and fully examine the beliefs, values, and presumptions that are behind the policies and practices that drove the daily functions of this school. To comprehend the Dual Capacity-Building Framework in its entirety would have required a paradigm shift and complete change in mindset for many of the participants in this study. It is through this study that I have truly learned about the significance of engaging in the authentic process of establishing effective home-school partnerships and the value of taking the time to explore the beginning steps.

Through this study I have learned that schools are indeed institutions that operate by their own set of beliefs and cultural practices. In the process of breaking into an institutional culture, one must not only examine the system in and of itself, but also the individuals within the system. This could take years to uncover. The administrators in this study were eager to volunteer their school and participate in this study. However, finding additional participants presented many

challenges and spoke to the disconnected culture that had just begun to emerge at the conclusion of this study.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine how the implementation of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships achieves its intended purpose, as one elementary school used this framework to assist with their goals of building a family literacy program. The interplay among all stakeholders (parents, teachers, and school administrators) was also closely examined, as all parties worked together to create a partnership program. This study took place in one elementary school in a large suburban Midwestern school district and utilized case study methodology to provide an in-depth understanding of the specific ways in which the participants engaged with the Dual Capacity-Building Framework.

The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships was designed as a scaffold for the development of family engagement initiatives; guiding school leaders and teachers to consider the necessary conditions for establishing and sustaining effective home-school partnerships (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). The framework is not a blueprint, or step-by-step guide for engagement initiatives (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). As most educators express a desire to engage with families and support the ideals of establishing partnerships, many continue to lack the necessary knowledge, skills, and belief systems to implement and sustain effective home-school partnerships (Epstein, 2013; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Mapp & Hong, 2010; Weiss, Lopez & Rosenberg, 2010). The Dual Capacity-Building Framework was designed to combat this issue, laying out the necessary conditions to plan for establishing and sustaining effective home-school partnerships (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013).

At the onset of this study, the goal for this school was to build a family literacy program in an attempt to establish a shared language of learning between families and the school around literacy achievement. However, as all of the participants (parents, teachers, and school administrators) began to discuss the Dual Capacity-Building Framework and the ideals represented within it, all conversations centered around the foundational components in the process of establishing a partnership program, which were noticeably absent from this school, therefore, a family literacy plan was not created. As a result of these discussions, however, this school decided to make several changes that were implemented after the study, as their attempt to incorporate some of the principles represented in the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships. First, both of the participating administrators made a priority to be more visible in an attempt to establish relationships with families. Both administrators decided to be outside during “drop-off” and “pick-up” times. They are using this time to talk with families, introduce themselves, and ask parents if they have any questions or concerns. Next, both administrators have made a commitment to ensure there is parent representation on the home-school committee. At the time of this study, there were only teachers represented on this committee. Both administrators explained that they will begin the next school year with parent representation on this committee, with the goal of providing an opportunity for parents to have a voice in the school. Finally, teachers and administrators voiced their commitment to find opportunities to host events outside of the school, exploring opportunities in the community. One administrator, realizing that certain students were not able to attend an in-school math tutoring program due to time and transportation constraints, attempted to bring the tutoring program to the building where they lived. Unfortunately, these efforts were not successful due to district-level concerns, but it was encouraging to see the shift in thinking that initiated the attempt.

Constantino (2016) explains how vital it is to take the time to examine school culture, as he states:

It is absolutely imperative that we examine our beliefs and the system of beliefs that drive our schools. Not taking the time to do so will bring about little change not only in family engagement but to any effort we undertake that has at its core a goal for fundamental improvement (p. 31).

The findings from this study illustrate this very sentiment. Developing a school culture and atmosphere conducive to establishing and sustaining effective home-school partnerships is the very first and most critical step in the process for implementing the necessary changes to engaging all families around student success.

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Appendix A

Interview #1 Protocol: Teachers

Date: _____

Time of Interview: _____

Place: _____

Interviewee: _____

Questions:

1. How long have you served in your role as _____ at this school?
2. What does parental involvement (or engagement) mean to you? How would you define it?
3. How do you define “home-school” partnerships?
4. What does a school embracing home-school partnerships look like?
5. In your opinion, what does the school need to do to create home-school partnerships?
6. Do you believe this school is a school that embraces home-school partnerships? Why? Or Why not?
7. Do you believe teachers are provided with resources to develop home-school partnerships? If so, what resources have been provided? If not, what resources need to be provided?
8. In what ways are parents currently involved in the school?
9. What do you believe the role of parents should be at this school?
10. What do you believe should be the role of teachers in establishing home-school partnerships?
11. What would you like parents to do more? What do you wish parents would do less?
12. Is there anything that you would like to say or add, that I did not ask?

Interview #2 Protocol: Teachers

Date: _____

Time of Interview: _____

Place: _____

Interviewee: _____

Questions:

1. Describe how you define a partnership between the school and the family?
2. In what ways, if any, has your perception changed about the roles of parents, teachers, and/or administrators since utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework?
3. What do you believe the role of teachers should be in establishing and sustaining partnerships with the school?
 - a. The role of parents...
 - b. The role of administrators...
4. What are the key ingredients to establishing an effective partnership between families and the school?
5. How do you currently feel about the engagement of parents in this school?
6. In what ways can parents, teachers, and administrators support partnerships with families?
7. What, if anything, would you change about the way the school (teachers and administrators) partners with families?
 - a. The way parents partner with families...
8. What is your view of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships?
 - a. What is helpful? Not helpful? What is missing?
9. Is there anything that you would like to say or add, that I did not ask?

Appendix B

Interview #1 Protocol: Administrators

Date: _____

Time of Interview: _____

Place: _____

Interviewee: _____

Questions:

1. How long have you served in your role as _____ at this school?
2. What does parental involvement (or engagement) mean to you? How would you define it?
3. How do you define “home-school” partnerships?
4. What does a school embracing home-school partnerships look like?
5. In your opinion, what does the school need to do to create home-school partnerships?
6. Do you believe this school is a school that embraces home-school partnerships? Why? Or Why not?
7. In what ways are parents involved in the school community?
8. What do you believe the role of parents should be at this school?
9. What would you like parents to do more? What do you wish parents would do less?
10. In what ways does this school serve the specific interests of the community?
11. Is there anything that you would like to say or add, that I did not ask?

Interview #2 Protocol: Administrators

Date: _____

Time of Interview: _____

Place: _____

Interviewee: _____

Questions:

1. Describe how you define a partnership between the school and the family?
2. In what ways, if any, has your perception changed about the roles of parents, teachers, and/or administrators since utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework?
3. What do you believe the role of administrators should be in establishing and sustaining partnerships with the school?
 - a. The role of teachers...
 - b. The role of parents...
4. What are the key ingredients to establishing an effective partnership between families and the school?
5. How do you currently feel about the engagement of parents in this school?
6. In what ways can parents, teachers, and administrators support partnerships with families?
7. What, if anything, would you change about the way the school (teachers and administrators) partners with families?
 - a. The way parents partner with the school...
8. What is your view of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships?
 - a. What is helpful? Not helpful? What is missing?
9. Is there anything that you would like to say or add, that I did not ask?

Appendix C

Interview #1 Protocol: Parents

Date: _____

Time of Interview: _____

Place: _____

Interviewee: _____

Questions:

1. How many of your children are currently attending this school?
2. How long have your children attended this school?
3. What does parental involvement (or engagement) mean to you? How would you define it?
4. How do you define “home-school” partnerships?
5. What does a school that embraces home-school partnerships look like?
6. Do you believe this school is a school that embraces home-school partnerships? Why? Or Why not?
7. Are you currently involved in the school community? If so, in what ways? If not, why not?
8. What do you believe the role of parents should be at this school?
9. What do you believe the role of teachers should be in establishing home-school partnerships?
10. What do you believe the role of school leaders (such as the Principal and the Assistant Principal) should be in establishing home-school partnerships?
11. What would you like the school (teachers and administrators) to do more? What do you wish the school would do less?
12. Is there anything that you would like to say or add, that I did not ask?

Interview #2 Protocol: Parents

Date: _____

Time of Interview: _____

Place: _____

Interviewee: _____

Questions:

1. Describe how you define a partnership between the school and the family?
2. In what ways, if any, has your perception changed about the roles of parents, teachers, and/or administrators since utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework?
3. What do you believe the role of parents should be in establishing and sustaining partnerships with the school?
 - a. The role of teachers...
 - b. The role of administrators...
4. What are the key ingredients to establishing an effective partnership between families and the school?
5. In what ways can parents, teachers, and administrators support partnerships with families?
6. What, if anything, would you change about the way the school (teachers and administrators) partners with families?
7. What is your view of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships?
 - a. What is helpful? Not helpful? What is missing?
8. Is there anything that you would like to say or add, that I did not ask?

Appendix D

Observation Protocol – Collaboration Mtg. #1

Location: Site Library

Date: 1/7/16

Time Stated: 4:50pm

Length of Activity: 1hr 10 min

<i>Descriptive Notes</i>	<i>Reflective Notes</i>
<p>After introduction of Dual Capacity-Building Framework – parent began discussion on how she attempted to try to get other parent friends to participate in the study – explaining to them that it was their opportunity to give their opinion and they did not want to participate.</p>	
<p>Administrator responded to parent by asking why they didn't want to participate. Parent responded by stating that they were concerned about what the administrators would think if they gave their true opinion. They wanted to know what the "effect" would be. Administrator stated that information was "worrisome" to her.</p>	
<p>Teacher #1 explained that she has been at the school for 9 years and that getting parents involved has been a struggle for all 9 years. "Parents will come for things that are fun, but not for learning". Administrator began listing the events that are well attended. Explained they come because they get a "free book and some juice". PTA parent participant stated that they appear to be well attended, but there are 500 families and only about 60 attend.</p>	
<p>Teacher #1 responded by stating that she just doesn't know what to do anymore because she tries her best to communicate with all of the families. Another teacher participant explained that looking at the framework and what it states as the "pillars" or the foundation, is not happening. She explained that she doesn't believe that the</p>	

<p>school has the foundation in place.</p>	
<p>Another teacher participant agreed – using the data that is sent home as an example. This teacher asked the parents if the MAP data that is sent home is beneficial to them. All parent participants said no. One parent explained that she had to Google when the recent PARCC scores were sent home. If she didn't do that, it would be just a number sent home that means nothing. Another parent joined in stating that she didn't understand why the paper with the scores stated her kid wasn't "College and Career Ready" and she started freaking out, she took the scores to parent-teacher conferences so that the teacher could explain.</p>	
<p>Admin asked if they had a MAP parent night does everyone think families would attend – Almost everyone said "no". She asked why – and a parent explained that in the grand scheme of things – a MAP score isn't important; she wants to know about the day-to-day things that occur in the classroom. What the teacher thinks about her child's learning and progress.</p>	
<p>Teacher #1 explained that they don't want to talk about that stuff either, but they have to because the district says they have to – they have to give "all this data".</p> <p>PTA Parent explained that she knows that parental involvement is important because she knows the effect she has on her daughters and she wants to have "healthy habits" at home. It wasn't until she started to volunteer in her daughter's K classroom that she began to understand what it means for children to learn their sight words and what the different levels meant. That helped her to help her child at home because she had the knowledge to. So when she attempts to get parents involved and they say they don't have time, she gets upset because she is a single mom and just graduated from school</p>	

<p>and she makes the time because she knows it's important – because what her children value in education comes from her.</p> <p>Other parents also discussed stories of other parents “making excuses” “I don't like that teacher and she doesn't like me” “The teacher doesn't like my child”</p>	
<p>Admin: “So how do we change that...where do we start”.</p> <p>PTA parent held up framework and stated: “this is a tall order”.</p> <p>Teacher explained that the framework is a “full time job”. Parent explained that she thinks that many parents don't know what to do or how to participate. It could be intimidating going to talk to the principal.</p> <p>Teacher #1 responded, “but they have no problem complaining to the principal when it's negative and something they don't like”.</p>	
<p>Parent explained that some parents may feel intimidated because when the teacher states that the child isn't where they need to be – it's a reflection on them because they know that they aren't doing everything that they could be doing and they don't want to hear or don't know how to handle that.</p> <p>She then gave an example about how she tried for 2 years to explain to teacher (in a previous school) that her child needed questions read to him, that he knew the content, but the reading was standing in the way. No one listened to her for two years, but she didn't give up.</p> <p>Another parent stated that – in this school she knows that a lot of things are given to her, but no one ever asks her opinion. “What does she want to know about her child at conferences?” “What does she feel is important?”</p>	
<p>Researcher ended the meeting at this time with some things to reflect about...</p> <p>Explained that I heard a lot parents being afraid/intimidated that they will be judged – that goes back to feeling welcomed and building trust. Also asked if there was a current process or protocol in place for parents to have a voice...</p>	

<p>how is their feedback collected and how are their voices represented? Reminded of next meeting on 2/4.</p>	
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Observation Protocol – Collaboration Mtg. #2

Location: Site Library

Date: 2/4/16

Time Started: 4:45pm

Length of Activity: 1 hr

<i>Descriptive Notes</i>	<i>Reflective Notes</i>
<p>R asked: What is your view of the DCBF since your introduction last month?</p> <p>TP: Disappointed with the culture... the culture of the staff. Believes there should be a leadership role for parents. – Can parents (or a parent representative) be on the BLT (Building Leadership Team)</p> <p>TP: The current BLT discusses PD agendas, and goals – Questioned the benefit for parents to be on that committee</p>	
<p>TP asks Ad if parent on BLT can happen... Ad discussed the importance of her visibility – having conversations with parents. Explained that her and other Ad shared ideas about simple fixes to address the need of building relationships with parents.</p> <p>TP: “The investment is worth it”</p>	
<p>TP: Expressed “feeling bad” that she couldn’t check the box on the 5 essential survey that asked if parents were invited to meetings, etc. “We didn’t do that and it made me sad to check that box”</p> <p>Ad: we need to create a new committee or expand the Home/School committee to allow for a place for parent voice.</p>	

<p>Ad asked R to share data related to partnering with families. R shared studies explaining that the strongest relationship with student achievement are subtler ways such as parents communicating expectations of academic aspirations.</p> <p>TP: told a story of a student in reading interventions where student and mom together set reading goals to improve reading levels</p>	
<p>TP: Explained that teachers work really hard to try to make events around learning and make it engaging however “It makes us feel defeated when we don’t get them to show up” Posed question: “How can we get them involved in what we do? What are they saying at home?”</p> <p>Ad: Discussed goal setting at conferences between the parent, student, and teacher.</p> <p>TP: The goals need to be realistic, measureable, achievable</p> <p>Ad: In most recent newsletter – shared with parents the “4 at the door” – questions that parents can ask their children.</p> <p>PP: “I looked at it and thought, I wouldn’t ask those questions so I haven’t asked them”.</p> <p>Ad: [addressed parents] “How can we make it so that it is comfortable for you?”</p> <p>Ad: discussed how this conversation has allowed her to reflect on beliefs – related to superintendent’s message about what we believe about our kids. “They don’t care’ – I will never say that about parents again.”</p>	
<p>PP: Received feedback from teacher 1st grader needed more specific details in writing – Expressed how she doesn’t know how to help with that or what her role in supporting his writing.</p> <p>TP: Discussed goal setting – bringing in work samples so that conference is around goal</p>	

<p>Ad: [addressed everyone] “How can we communicate in a parent friendly way?”</p> <p>TP: Can we take 5 essentials data and use that to see where we can take action</p> <p>Ad: Learner Qualities – Language of School</p> <p>PP: Don’t understand the questions (4 at the door) ...</p> <p>Ad: Explained to PP that those are the questions that Admin asks students and Tchrs asks...Learner Qualities</p> <p>TP: Can create bookmarks for kids to take home so prnts can see them there too.</p>	
<p>Ad: asked every PP (and other parents) in attendance: “What will be your utopia”</p> <p>PP: frustrated with new Math resource.</p> <p>Discussion ensued about a PD for parents when we know there will be a change in curriculum</p>	
<p>Discussion about tasking with the home-school committee with communication plan – but parents need to be on the committee TP: “We’re doing all of the talking”</p> <p>PP: Expressed desire for some accountability on the parents. She doesn’t understand why her parent friends were intimidated.</p> <p>Ad: “I had a lot of excuses. The excuses stop now”. We need to embrace new ideas and shift the culture.</p> <p>Discussion about the most recent event (multicultural night) – everyone perceived as a “huge hit”</p> <p>PP: Perception in community is “this side of town”. District issues with school not visible on</p>	

the district website – the things we do don't get attention.

Ad: We will work harder to bring attention to our events to district PR person.

TP: [directed to PP] "Please let us know if you see an improvement."

Ad: Make a commitment to: forming a new committee – branch off the home/school committee with parents – get parent voice

Goal setting with parents around literacy – linked to learning – engaging parents in the link between home & school language.

Appendix E

THE DUAL CAPACITY-BUILDING FRAMEWORK FOR FAMILY SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

WHY PARTNER WITH FAMILIES:

- A WIDE and LONG history of research consistently demonstrates the beneficial effects of parental engagement and family-school partnerships.
- This research shows examples of the important and varied roles that families play in student success.
 - supporting student achievement
 - motivating and inspiring determination
 - influencing beliefs and values about education
- The relationship between parental involvement and student achievement is found to be consistent with families of all economic, racial/ethnic, and educational backgrounds, as well as students at all ages.

THE DUAL CAPACITY-BUILDING FRAMEWORK:

- The framework supports designing family engagement initiatives that develop knowledge among educators AND families to partner with one another around student success.
- The framework is designed to act as a scaffold to support the development of family engagement strategies, policies, and programs.

"The Dual Capacity-Building Framework should be seen as a compass, laying out the goals and conditions necessary to chart a path towards effective family engagement efforts that are linked to student achievement and school improvement." - Mapp & Kuttner, 2013

THE CHALLENGE:

- Many schools and districts struggle with how to establish and sustain positive relationships with families.
- Principals and teachers across the country identify "family engagement" as one of the most challenging aspects of their work.
- Families also have needs and may have had negative experiences with schools in the past, leading to distrust or feeling unwelcomed.

#1 CREATE OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities **MUST** be specifically designed to fit the particular circumstances for which they are developed.

Process Conditions: must be met in order for adult participants to come away with new knowledge and the desire to apply what they have learned.

"Process refers to the series of actions, operations, and procedures that are part of any activity or initiative." - Mapp & Kuttner, 2013

Organizational Conditions: must be put in place by the organization (school) to successfully implement and sustain family engagement.

PROCESS CONDITIONS:

Initiatives must be:

- **Linked to learning** - events linked to teaching and learning goals. Programs that are focused on enhancing parents' abilities to work as partners to support students.
- **Relationship** - a **goal** focus is on building respectful and trusting relationships between home and school.
- **Developmental** - the focus of the initiative is on developing and building knowledge as well as empowering and enabling parents to be confident, active, and informed stakeholders.
- **Collaborative/Cooperative** - Initiatives that bring families and staff together for shared learning - focused on building learning communities.
- **Interactive** - Participants must have the opportunity to practice what they have learned and receive feedback from each other, peers, and facilitators.

ORGANIZATIONAL CONDITIONS:

Initiatives must be:

Systemic - Initiatives are designed as core components of educational goals.

Integrated - Building the knowledge and skills of the families and staff are embedded into all structures of professional development.

Normalized - School leaders are committed to and have a systemic vision of family engagement and family-school partnerships.

POLICY AND PROGRAM GOALS:

"Policies and programs directed at improving family engagement must focus on building the capacities of both staff and families to engage in partnerships"

- Mapp & Kuttner, 2013

CAPACITY - "4 Cs"

Focus on building knowledge in the following components:

1. **Capacities** - School staff need knowledge about the assets (funds of knowledge) in the community and about building trusting relationships. Families need knowledge about student learning and the workings of the school system.
2. **Connections** - Building networks/relationships (family-teacher, parent-parent, and connections with community agencies and services).
3. **Confidence** - Staff and families need to feel a sense of comfort and belief in one another to be successful.
4. **Commitment** - Staff committed to working as partners with families and believe in the value of this work in improving student learning. Families need to view themselves as partners in their children's education.

Before effective home-school partnerships can be achieved, these 4 components of partnership capacity must be enhanced among school/teacher staff and families.

STAFF AND FAMILY PARTNERSHIP OUTCOMES

Staff who are prepared engage in partnerships with families can:

- honor and recognize families' existing knowledge, skill, and forms of engagement.
- create and sustain school cultures that welcome, invite, and promote family engagement.
- develop family engagement initiatives and connect them to student learning and development.

Families are prepared to engage in partnerships can engage in diverse roles such as:

- Supporters of their children's learning development
- Encouragers of achievement
- Monitorers of their children's tone, behavior, boundaries, etc.
- Models of lifelong learning
- Advocates for their child's learning
- Decision-makers of educational services
- Collaborators with school staff

THANK YOU!!!

