The Impact of Parental Involvement on Student Success: School and Family Partnership From The Perspective of Students

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THE IMPACT OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ON STUDENT SUCCESS: SCHOOL AND FAMILY PARTNERSHIP FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF STUDENTS

by
Tyler M. Bailey

A Dissertation

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late grandmother, Gladys Bailey Webb. With an unconditional love, support, and acceptance, I am the person I am today. I love you big, I love you little, I love you just like a little pig.
ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ON STUDENT SUCCESS: SCHOOL AND FAMILY PARTNERSHIP FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF STUDENTS

by
Tyler M. Bailey
Kennesaw State University, 2017

In this study, the impact of school-family relationships on student success were examined through the narratives of three fifth-grade students, their teachers, and the school’s curriculum coach. The study used these stories to understand better how student success was altered by parental involvement in the students’ academic, social, and emotional life.

The participants were selected from the same school located in a major southeastern city. The students and teachers were in the same class (within their respective roles) and the curriculum coach was closely connected to the other five participants through his administrative role. The students varied with regards to academic ability, demographics, and socioeconomics.

Through data gleaned from interviews, the study illuminated how participant students and educators interpreted various events within the students’ academic and family lives and how those events influenced personal success. All six narratives provided a more robust understanding regarding the interactions, relationships, communication, motivations, and responsibilities within the school-family relationship and how these elements impacted student success.

This research used a narrative method that guided analysis of significant elements and trends from the participants’ stories. Narrative research is a type of qualitative research that focuses entirely on individual narratives, whether written, spoken or otherwise visually
represented. This study employed the Overlapping Spheres of Influence of Parent, School, and Community Involvement (Epstein, 2009) as a theoretical framework. Epstein’s six types of identified involvement including; parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating in the community framed both the research questions and analysis within the study.

The findings of this study offer insightful personal accounts that may aid in the success of other students, families, and schools. Due to the qualitative nature of the methodology, this research, and its findings, cannot provide generalizable best practices for student success. Rather, the study offers insights that may assist educators and parents in better approaching the school-family relationship utilizing family structure, schools, and the surrounding community.

Ultimately, four areas of investment were identified in the research including; responsibility, motivation, communication, and student relationships with teachers and parents. These identified areas formed a well-rounded perspective on student success and how parents played a role in that success. Ultimately, the personal accounts imparted by the students, teachers, and curriculum coach provided valuable perspectives into their educational experiences and viewpoints and formed relevant insights to be reviewed by teachers, parents, and school community.

*Keywords:* Joyce Epstein’s Spheres of Influence, Parental Involvement, Communication
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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Context of Study

The education community is aware of the link between the academic support of students and the student’s educational achievement (Shepard et al., 2012). Among the many support systems available to students, parental involvement is a factor that is heavily linked to student achievement (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012). The term parental involvement in education underscores the shared responsibility that families and schools work together in promoting student success. Parental or familial involvement are terms used to describe any support a student receives from a guardian, family, or other mature influence in their home-life. Though the literature uses numerous terms (e.g. parents, guardians, family) to refer to these mentors, “parental involvement’ is the most common descriptor of the resulting relationship. For clarity in this study, parental involvement will be the operationalized term used to define any relationship(s) in the home community that support a student’s academic growth. Given the powerful potential of parental involvement within the school-community-family relationship, this study seeks to shed light on how parental involvement contributed to student success.

Ideally, schools and community-based organizations are committed to engaging families in meaningful ways, and families are committed to actively supporting their children’s learning and development that ultimately led to success for that student (Hilado, Kallemeyn, Phillips, 2013). When this shared balance of responsibility is developed and maintained, student learning and achievement may be better supported. Empirical studies of parental involvement and parenting styles have indicated that parents are key contributors to both school engagement and their children’s performance at school (Bempechat and Shernoff 2012; Waanders et al. 2007). Parents and educators play a key role in the educational, social, and emotional maturity of the
student, but the support given to relationships between schools and families varies. Parental involvement is different for every student based on several factors that may or may not be under the control of the parent (e.g. school outreach, parenting style, parent work schedule, student needs, family resources, etc.). This complex nature of the school-family relationship presents many challenges that need to be better understood, therefore, this study is a value analysis of parental involvement and how it related to the success of the student.

**Challenges to parental involvement.** It has been suggested that a student’s engagement with their parents, teachers and peers can influence their academic achievement (Lam et al. 2012; Li and Lerner 2013; Wentzel 2012). The question is, how do educators, parents, and the community work together to support the student and improve the overall engagement of all parties? With the overall goal of improving student achievement, researchers are continually analyzing parent involvement (i.e. Vellymalay, 2012). There is evidence to support that parent-child interactions, specifically stimulating and responsive parenting practices, are important influences on a child's academic development (Christian, Morrison, & Bryant, 1998; Committee on Early Childhood Pedagogy, 2000). The effects of student achievement appear to be directly impacted by the effectiveness of learning support from parents, teachers, and community. This growth and academic achievement can be attributed to the amount of support the student(s) received that directly influenced the level of effort put forth to achieve their best individual success in school and active engagement in school activities (Jelas et al. 2016). While the need for support is vast, parents are faced with increasing demands of maintaining work and home life responsibilities. Given these challenges, understanding how parents maintain balance - and the consequences when they cannot - is one of the central factors in understanding how parental involvement can better support student learning and a school-home relationship.
The school-home relationship. The need for a relationship between the parent and school is evident. Ball (1997), suggests that such relationships can be straightforward and supported by the school with a set of measures aimed at maximizing parent-teacher communication; however, in practice, this proves more complicated. Frequently, parents need extra guidance from the school to navigate the unknown territory of contemporary education. When schools and families work together they are benefiting the student both academically and socially. Equitable access requires that school staff and all families support each students’ individual developmental needs, skills, strengths, interests, and aspirations (Williams & Sanchez, 2013). To this end, effective student support programs are designed to reach beyond the academic domain, to overcome academic and non-academic barriers to learning, “increasing students’ chances to succeed in school; and expanding students’ opportunities for positive youth development” (Child Trends, 2014, p. 14).

Williams and Sanchez (2013) suggest that there is often an educator-held perception that most parents do not understand instructional deliveries and ways students are learning in the classroom. They suggest this misunderstanding makes it challenging for the parents to actively participate in their student’s education. Williams and Sanchez further indicate that parents feel they face obstacles that prevent them from being involved in the ways and levels that they desire. Four themes emerged to describe the parental involvement barriers: time poverty, lack of access, lack of financial resources, and lack of awareness. Interestingly, of these four themes, the lack of awareness was highlighted by the school employees. These employees suggested the parents’ lack of knowledge and understanding of school/classroom events often strained the interactions between the home and school system (Williams & Sanchez, 2013). Williams and Sanchez’s findings indicate a clear disconnect between schools and families.
The disconnect between academic support at school and at home is especially problematic when one considers how important it is for parents to have an active role in the success of their student. Sheppard (2009) found that parental involvement affects students’ achievement more than school procedures. Specifically, families who engaged in parenting programs, to be more engaged in their child’s education, noticed an increase in their student’s reading and social behavior abilities (Lewis-Antoine, 2012; Sheppard, 2009). Furthermore, a host of other studies researching the effects of parental involvement and student achievement, noted a defining positive relationship between the two factors (what 2 factors) in a school environment (Baharudin et al., 2010; Epstein et al., 2009; Herell, 2011; Pattanaik & Sriram, 2010; Wright, 2009; Wyche, 2010).

Parental involvement is an important indicator of student success in school (Baharudin et al., 2010; Epstein et al., 2009; Herell, 2011; Pattanaik & Sriram, 2010; Wright, 2009; Wyche, 2010); but, establishing a positive relationship between school and home life can be challenging. Rapp and Duncan (2012) suggest the school must facilitate a collaborative, democratic environment in which community and family opinions, beliefs, and ideas are heard and acted upon, meanwhile communicating the rationale and objectives of instructional strategies used in the classroom. The ultimate goal is to form a community of practice in which all members work towards student success. (Rapp & Duncan 2012).

A conceptual model for parental involvement. It has been established that parental involvement appears to positively support student achievement. Additionally, challenges have been noted regarding implementation of interventions to better support the school-family relationship. Here, a model identifying six types of parental involvement will frame the upcoming analysis of student success and how parents and the school play a key role in that level
of success. Joyce Epstein, a prominent education researcher out of John Hopkins University has developed a framework focused on school, parent, and community involvement that leads to a better partnership and ultimately greater support for the student. The framework she developed has evolved through her many years of working with educators and families. Epstein’s six types of parental involvement framework helps educators develop more comprehensive programs for school and family partnership. The framework not only helps school communities, but helps researchers ask questions and measure results in ways that inform and improve practices in school and parent involvement. (Lattimore 2013). As the conceptual framework and theoretical model for this study, examining parental involvement in relation to student success, the six types of parental involvement will serve as the guiding protocol for researching parental involvement including parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community (a more detailed exposition of the model will be shared in Chapter 2). These six forms of parent involvement represent behaviors that occur in educational and home settings, as well as communication between family members and educators.

Epstein’s model of involvement includes three major spheres of influence including: parents, school, and community. When all three spheres are working together, they can impact the success of the student and positively impact the parent, school, and community at the simultaneously (Epstein, 2001, 2005, Eipstein et al., 2009). Epstein (2009) describes school-orientation involvement as actions parents take to assist with learning or other events in the school setting, as well as the parent’s participation in decision-making organizations. Beyond this conventional model of school-based parental involvement, Epstein’s model elaborates on the type of involvement that can occur at home. The model acknowledges the importance of parenting behavior, such as providing for children’s basic needs, to children’s educational
success. To bridge the gap between the school and home environments, communication is also represented as a form of involvement that parents and school personnel must engage (Epstein, 2009; Manz, 2012 p. 232). Each of Epstein’s six types of parental involvement involve unique influences on the growth, development, and learning of the individual child; in addition to aiding the growth of the parents, school and community (Rafiq et al., 2013).

**Statement of the Problem**

Both anecdotal and empirical evidence suggest that generating or improving parental involvement is challenging and multifaceted. Unique educational environments and family identities create a need for more detailed research to investigate various ways to connect schools and families. Building and maintaining the necessary relationships between schools and families requires a concentrated effort (Epstein, 2009), particularly if families and/or schools do not have the means, time, or background knowledge to engage fully and frequently (Bartel, 2010). Current researchers continue to investigate the influence of parental involvement on achievement, accountability, and attendance. For instance, Baharudin, Chi Yee, Sin Jing, and Zulkefly (2010) identified a relationship between parental involvement and student achievement. In practice, however, a gap continues to exist between the additional support educators expect from parents and actual parent response (which can appear limited) resulting from unclear or uncommunicated expectations (Ice & Hoover-Dempsey, 2011). Contrarily, there also seems to be a lack of understanding between school staff members and student’s parents regarding what constitutes parental involvement (Smith et al., 2011). Misconceptions on all sides of the school-family relationship further confound an already challenging dynamic regarding parental involvement.

The literature suggests that schools need a greater understanding of student’s home/family lives and the families need a better understanding of educational practices in the
schools (e.g. Ice & Hoover-Dempsey, 2011; Smith et al., 2011). Therefore, it is imperative for educators and parents to work together to become more holistically involved in the child’s learning by overcoming or even leveraging the social forces and socio-economic challenges that children, their families, and the schools may face. The purpose of this study was to investigate the educational lives, challenges, and success of fifth grade students in relation to the involvement of their parents and school. With Epstein’s six typologies of parental involvement as a theoretical framework, this research investigated thematic evidence gleaned from student and teacher narratives as well as observational data from the school’s curriculum coach. The purpose was to illuminate themes regarding parental involvement and how parental involvement relates to student success.

Research Questions

In order to learn more about how these communities function, a qualitative study using narrative framework was employed. The primary research question was “What can the stories of fifth grade students and their teachers tell us about the nature of parental involvement and its impact on student learning?” Several secondary questions were imbedded in the primary questions including “How do student narratives differ from those of teachers?” and “How is responsibility framed within the school/family relationship?” Understanding more about these crucial relationships helped develop a greater awareness of parental involvement and its integral relationships.
Significance of the Study

The significance of this study stems from the value of individual stories of parental involvement. The factors within the student and teacher narratives play a key role in that interaction with the students and school; and ultimately student success. The school’s curriculum coach also added important observational notes and interactions with the participants to contribute to the study. A greater understanding of these elements is valuable because it provides nuance to the commonly accepted finding that parental involvement in public schools is simply linked to the parent’s role in encouraging the academic and behavioral success of the student (Smith, Wohlstetter, Kuzin, & De Pedro, 2011). The goal of the study was to analyze real world examples of parental involvement as it related to the student and school to provide both thematic commonalities between student and teacher narratives as well as unique cases. Such analysis provides a deeper understanding of the relationships with which school community members can better frame analysis of their own community and family relationships. Data and suggestions from this study and will inform improved communication, volunteering, home life, and overall involvement and relationship between the parent and school.
Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Overview and Introduction to Parental Involvement in America

The evidence is now beyond dispute. When schools work together with families to support learning, children tend to succeed not just in school, but throughout life. (Henderson & Berla, 1994, p. 1)

This chapter serving as a literature review on parental involvement lays the foundation for this study. It provided insight regarding the history of parental involvement, policy that has effected parental involvement, barriers, and Joyce Epstein’s School-Family-Community Partnership of Overlapping Spheres of Influence serving as the theoretical framework.

Throughout the history of education in America, there has been an ever-changing viewpoint on parental involvement and its place in education. This section begins with a review of colonial parental involvement, which took place in the home provided by parents with a heavy influence on religion. Next, the review highlights the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to incorporate outside influence on education and a decrease in parental involvement. This is followed by discussion of the rise of parental involvement in the mid twentieth century within federal educational legislation. Specifically, the twenty-first century saw the adoption of two reauthorizations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in the No Child Left Behind Act (which added to already in place parental involvement structures) and the Every Student Success Act, adding to parental involvement through a strong family, school, and community partnership.

The final sections of the literature review develops the theoretical framework for the study using the six types of parental involvement outlined by Joyce Epstein (2009). At the helm of parental involvement, Joyce Epstein of John Hopkins University, developed the School-Family-Community Partnership of Overlapping Spheres of Influence. The spheres of influence
incorporate six key types of parental involvement: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. Each type of parental involvement outlines and defines practices and strategies that the school and family can enact to produce a strong healthy level of parental involvement.

“Parent engagement is about engaging families to become partners with the school and listening to “what parents think, dream, and worry about” (Ferlazzo, 2011 p. 12).

A History of Parental Involvement in United States Education

Parental involvement in colonial America. Before religious leaders or the local colonies established the first public schools in America, education was handled by and through the family structure at home (Pulliam, 1987). Families instilled their core values, work ethic, discipline, and various other skills the family and society deemed necessary and appropriate to fit the need of society. The education that the school-aged students received was handled privately within the family, rather than publicly in public institutions (Berger, 1981). As students matured in their education, they typically received additional education in a trade apprenticeship sought out and established by their parents (Hiatt-Michael, 1994).

As education evolved under the governance of the townships, religion was at the apex and primary driving force in education. Educational Boards were comprised of local parents within the townships, which heavily influenced the educational decision making. Due to the diverse religious sect, schools were heavily individualized by the viewpoints of the parents with the curriculum focus on religion, reading, and writing. Along with religion, social class was also a large factor in the organization of the school, due to the colonists’ desire to maintain the British focus on class structure. (Hiatt-Michael, 1994).
The shift to public education. The late sixteenth and early seventeenth century saw a change to public education and level of parental involvement, which was once securely in the homes of the students and provided by the parents. Two different types of jurisdiction were established in America, and hinged on whether one’s colony was still under British rule or if the colony was independent. Colonies still under British rule, relied on the authorities within the colony to direct the education. Colonies separated from the British rule, provide education based on the needs of that colony and established law to enforce the direct needs (Hiatt-Michael, 1994).

The introduction of taxes supporting education did not come into focus until the Revolutionary War era (Pulliam, 1987). Key participants in the birth and establishment of the American life such as; Benjamin Rush, Georgia Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin were advocates for education calling for the establishment of public education supported through taxes and instruction of reading, writing, and rhetoric. Jefferson, a pioneer in the colony of Virginia wanted to provide education for all, and understood that not all parents were capable or fit to provide a proper education at home. With this understanding, Jefferson pushed for free public education for every child. The idea of a universal public school was not to the liking of legislators in Virginia, and therefore not supported. It was not until the nineteenth century that this notion of providing an education for all, regardless of financial backing, sprangboarded in American society (Hiatt-Michael, 1994).

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century, equality for all as well as education for all was highly prevalent. By 1860, almost every state housed a public school system. Horace Mann, a pioneer in the public education system, established a vision of public education that was coming to life and would ultimately decrease the level of parental involvement. As much as Mann’s vision established the common school for all, historian
Lawrence Cremin in *Transformation of the American School*, gave credit to the public school administrators for building the public school system of the twentieth century (Cremin, 1961). Public school in America was founded on the notion that it would be a forum for diverse elements of focusing on the norms of its inhabitants, America’s native and immigrant cultures. William Torrey Harris, Superintendent of St. Louis Public Schools and later U. S. Commissioner of Education, is credited with keeping this notion of education alive with scientifically-managed, graded elementary and secondary schools. Public education, “a melting pot of education,” continued for all, and by all parents, not just the poor, minority, or immigrant parents in the United States (Hiatt-Michael, 1994).

**Industrialization and compulsory education.** During the nineteenth century, the United States saw a surprising number of children enter the workforce, and therefore the establishment of child labor laws. To help supplement the family’s income, immigrant children were working in mines, mills, and factories instead of going to school (Rippa, 1988). The same was true for families with farms. Families needed their children to stay home and increase the family’s ability to survive by helping on the farm and around the house. The labor market based on cheap labor also bred a number of human injustices, which brought about child labor laws from labor unions of working men. As unions went on strike and local politicians developed and enforced child labor laws, compulsory school attendance, and truancy laws that were enacted to keep kids in school and not in the workforce (Hiatt-Michael, 1994). By 1918, all states had passed compulsory school attendance and truancy legislation (Rippa, 1988). No longer could parents keep their children out of school without the permission of school authorities. The popularity of compulsory and truancy accountability was heavily supported by many to keep children in school, off the streets, and out of the factories. These laws created a paradigm
wherein parents had little control over the schooling environment and, ultimately, made it almost impossible for strong parental relationship with schools (Hiatt-Michael, 1994).

**Professionalization of education and the of loss parental involvement.** As illustrated above, parental involvement was central to early American education, but as the system became more bureaucratized, parents were forced out of the education of their children more often. This loss of parental connection and control was due, in large, to the growing American population, the growth of the industrial centers, the urbanization of the nation, and the utilization of scientific management techniques in business and industry (Hiatt-Michael, 1994). Educational leaders sought to establish a sense of hierarchy within education to developed procedures, roles, and functions of personnel. This type of schooling was a clear departure from previously established schools that were large single room schools accommodating numerous grades and taught by a locally hired teacher. Graded schools, children classified by grade and grade specific curriculum, were first established in 1848 in the state of Massachusetts and quickly spread across the United States (Hiatt-Michael, 1994).

Graded schools were not run by a single educator and needed additional personnel to aid in the daily functioning of the school. Additional teachers, a principal, and a superintendent were needed to ensure the success and growth of the schools in each town. During the mid-1800s, Mann and Henry Barnard lead the bureaucratization of public schools and the professional growth of the education faculty. Their focus was to provide education to the children that hinged on the scientific management of the industrial age. For schools to operate effectively in an industrialized society, the schools need to maintain a process of standardization and systemization (Hiatt-Michael, 1994).
During this era in education, society members believed the notion that education should be provided by professional teachers and administrators, not parents. Educators possess the knowledge and time to adequately educate a child and meet the challenges of emerging technology. With the layers of bureaucracy being established in education, parents soon no longer had a place in education. The role that was once held by a board of parents, was now replaced by a superintendent. Davies (1992) believes, professionalism of administrators and teachers led to keeping parents out of power influence. Due to the high level of education and the professional growth of teachers, teachers pursued additional education and separated themselves from the parents in the community in which their school was located. The bureaucracy surrounding the education system and the professional growth of the “expert” teacher drastically reduced the level of parental involvement in schools due to the now numerous grade levels in which encompass a school (Hiatt-Michael, 1994).

**The reassertion of parental involvement and the PTA.** Through bureaucracy and the industrial movement, the parents’ perspective was parental involvement within education was nonexistent. Due to this perceived decrease in their role, mothers of students wanting to change the level of parental involvement formed the National Congress of Mothers (NCM) in 1897. Concerned with the growth and development of the student, these mothers who consisted of middle and upper class women, met on Saturdays to discuss education with teachers. The work of these women formed the basis of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) (Hiatt-Michael, 1994). The PTA helped to “Americanize newcomers to the country and to teach middle class parenting” (Davies, 1992). During the early part of the twentieth century, the PTA helped to foster the connection between home and school.
Parental involvement was also aided by the influence of educational researchers whose studies pointed out the benefits parent involvement and the education of parents had on student success. This research was also written into educational legislation, mandating parent involvement in schools. Project Head Start in 1964 (the first federally funded legislation) and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, required advisory boards to be occupied by parents and participation by parents during classroom activities. Education for All Handicapped Act in 1974, established a required individualized education plan for all handicapped students and that parents must be active in developing their student’s educational plan. Head Start (an early childhood program) and other federally-funded programs are responsible for generating information, promoting research studies, and developing parent involvement. Forms of parent involvement included volunteering in the classroom, attending meetings, working at schools, and participating in school-wide activities (Hiatt-Michael, 1994).

**Parental Involvement and Policy in an Age of Accountability**

**The No Child Left Behind Act (2001).** In 2001, Parental involvement caught the attention of many when the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was passed by the federal government. With the addition of NCLB’s parental involvement support requirements to existing Title I efforts, it became mandatory for schools to actively establish ties with the community. The NCLB Act (Public Law 107–110) is an amendment of the Administration’s Elementary and Secondary Education Act (20 U.S.C. 6301 et seq.) that was passed in 2001 and signed into law in 2002. The intention of the act was to close the achievement gap through the work of flexibility, accountability, and choice, so all students have the potential to succeed (New
York Times, 2012). This framework is designed to mandate certain efforts so families, educators, and communities can work together to further the impact of teaching and learning. The important aspect of these provisions is highlighted by the shared responsibility between schools and parents to promote greater student achievement. Additional factors include, expanded public school choice and supplemental educational services for eligible children in low-performing schools, local development of parental involvement plans with sufficient flexibility to address local needs, and building parents’ capacity for using effective practices to improve their own children’s academic achievement (NCLB 2004).

Through time, a common theme that the education world has seen to be consistently effective is that children benefit academically when parents and educators work together (Hiatt-Michael, 1994). As a result, parents' involvement in their children's education is a primary focus of No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (U.S. Dept. of Ed., 2007). Parental involvement can take many different forms and be interpreted in several ways. Within NCLB, there is understanding that there is no singular definition of parental involvement, but the policy operationalizes parental involvement as, “a parent actively engaging in communication with their student’s school to support academic success” (Patterson & Manning, 2008). This language supports a strong connection with the preexisting policy initiatives found in Title I.

**Title I.** The United States Department of Education (2012) describes the rationale for The Title I Act as,

“the purpose of this title is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and state academic assessments” (Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies (Title I, Part A).
As written, the policy was designed to help the student in many ways, such as requiring schools provide parents with academic support. The support the adults received included additional education, parenting advice, and finding ways to include the parent in their student’s education (Patrikakou, 2005).

Title I aligns with NCLB in that it provided numerous ways for parents to be active within the school. These options helped schools meet the NCLB requirement that parents be included as part of the governing body at school. Additionally, parental involvement through Title I included a parent-school liaison that worked to incorporate strategies that bridge the gap between home and school life. It was imperative that NCLB work in conjunction with Title I requirements (as Title I was already in place) and still be an inclusive program that leads to the overall improvement of parental involvement, and in return, student success. Through the work of NCLB, mandates which supported parental involvement, educational and emotional benefits to the child become evident when families and teachers work together to support the student (Hammack, Foote, Garretson, & Thompson, 2012). These benefits are due to increased academic performance when parents are involved in their children’s education (Reece et al., 2013). The importance of parental involvement programs and activities link parents and teachers in an effort to provide vital support to students for their academic success.

**The Every Student Succeeds Act (2015).** With family and parents as the central focus, the Every Student Succeeds Acts focuses on the engagement of the family and parents as important pieces to the success of students. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) embodies the most recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), which was last reauthorized in 2002 as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Underneath ESSA, “It requires – for the first time in law – that every student in America be taught to high
learning standards that will prepare them for college and a career” (Every Student Succeeds Act Versus No Child Left Behind, 2016). The purpose of the Act is to provide all children, regardless of demographics, socioeconomics, or ability level, an impartial and high-quality education, with the focus on closing achievement gaps (Henderson, 2015).

Parents, families, and the community served as the driving force and decision makers under ESSA. Under ESSA, the purpose of the school district and school is to educate the parents, families, and community about education, and what is needed in education to provide, rigorous and successful instruction to each child. Parents, families, and the community are offered a wide variety of assistance, ranging from state standards to materials, to enable them to provide support for the child. The ESSA understands by providing support in a diverse manor, it will ultimately equip the parent, family, and community with the necessary skills and tools to have an impact on the student (Henderson, 2015).

**Contemporary Conceptual Frameworks for Parental Involvement**

In today’s educational society, when parental involvement strategies and practices are implemented amongst the teacher and the parent and a working relationship is formed, it enables the student to practice and acquire the necessary skills for both the classroom and home life (Aldridge, 2015). The National Education Association (NEA) states, “When parents are involved in their children's education at home, they do better in school. And when parents are involved in school, children go farther in school — and the schools they go to are better” (National Education Association). Jeynes (2011) advises parents to set the groundwork for this relationship by developing a well-rounded household that is loving and supportive, and communicating expectations with their student will all lead to the greater understanding and conformability of
their role as a parent in their student’s education. Through hard work and dedication to one another, parents and schools benefit from each other and positively impact the value of the student’s education (Warren, Noftle, Ganley, & Quintanar, 2011).

Children spend more time with their families during the first ten years of life than in any other social context and that is why the relationship between the home life and school life is strong (Patrikakou et al., 2005). The time the child spends with the family is most important to instill education and society norms that will provide the groundwork for future success in the child’s endeavors inside and outside of school. The National Education Association states, “(w)hen schools, parents, families, and communities work together to support learning, students tend to earn higher grades, attend school more regularly, stay in school longer, and enroll in higher level programs.” The time parents spend getting to know their student and keeping that relationship in good standing will enable the parent to be an active member of the student’s success, “(t)he experiences that parents afford students at home will be an extension of the efforts from school, which promotes the development of knowledge” (Folk, 2015). Throughout the student’s educational career, it is important that families are involved because there will come a time when the family and school will lean on each other for insight, guidance, and support. The team that is formed between the school and family will support and aid in forming a path for each child to the greatest, well-rounded education available to them (Keller 2011).

Teachers and the school community are capable of strongly influencing student development much like the family structure, hence the focus placed on the policies established by Title I, NCLB, and ESSA. There is a strong push for schools and families to work seamlessly together to maximize the overall potential of the student and educational growth. McFarland-Piazza, Lord, Smith, and Downey (2012) suggested the main element of a parental involvement
initiative must have a central focus on the parent-teacher relationship which is vital to the
learning environment and continuum of the student. To build an even stronger and successful
parent-teacher relationship, both parties must look at incorporating mutual traits such as respect,
cooperation, and a strong and unbiased understanding between the teacher and parent. The
impact families and parents have on the level of educational achievement of the student is
achieved through various practices. Patrikakou suggests several factors that promote how
parental involvement shapes student outcomes (2005):

- Interventions with a family support component positively affect children’s outcomes.
- Parental involvement is a mechanism through which the long-term effect of intervention
  is achieved.
- Indicators of parent involvement are associated with significantly higher levels of school
  performance and success.

A supportive family that is actively involved and engaged in their student’s education may
positively affect that student’s education. Research at The University of New Hampshire
provides empirical data to support that parental involvement is positively correlated to student
performance. The sample of students was sufficient to confirm the positive relationship exists
between parental involvement and student performance (Houtenville & Conway, 2008).

**Barriers to Parental Involvement**

Although parental involvement is recognized as significantly important in the education
of children, there remains great diversity of thought and opinion concerning parental
involvement. Parents come from diverse backgrounds and just as diverse are their own personal
experiences in education. The relationship parents have with education greatly contributes to
their attitudes and level of interaction with their student’s education, relationship with teachers, and how they view education overall (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

Barriers in parental involvement comes in many different shapes and sizes, educators must strive to understand what causes these said barriers in parental involvement. The literature-base includes discussion on several possible barriers which deter parents from partnering with schools including: communication barriers, culture and identity, and organizational barriers. To move forward and address school-home relationships more completely, educators must better understand barriers hindering parents from participating in their student’s academic well-being.

**Communication.** Communication is, seemingly, one of the most straight forward ways to improve understanding and relationships; however, in practice, communicating effectively often proves difficult (Wright (2009). Communication comes in many different spoken, written, and non-verbal forms (e.g. emails, phone calls, text, face to face communication); but, matching communication style to the diverse needs of individual families is challenging. Communication is key to parental involvement and a lack thereof can be detrimental; mistrust between the parent and teacher might be one of the most prevalent dynamics in today’s educational atmosphere (Griffin & Galassi, 2010).

Parents may be intimidated by the language, jargon, curriculum, and even the school personnel; consequently, they avoid communication with the school (Flynn, 2007). Teachers must allow parents and students the unbiased space to express themselves and by keeping an open line of communication, the teacher is achieving this end. A study on effective ways to communicate was conducted by Denessen et al. (2007), and results indicate that formal written communication between parents and teachers were not found to be effective, especially for ethnic minority parents. Most of the focus of communication falls on the teacher’s shoulders, but
communication happens between two parties. When teachers do not feel parental support, they often believe it is a waste of their time to contact parents (Flynn, 2007).

**Culture and Identity.** It is important for the reader to understand that there is no one way to define what is success or what it means to provide an appropriate level of parental support, but this study will provide narratives to be used in an effort to promote parental involvement at the school and family level. If one can be celebratory and inclusive of differences among the school community and families, parental involvement can benefit students. Overall, high parental involvement, regardless of ethnicity, socioeconomic status, a child’s sex, and a child’s motivational level, have been found to produce a positive correlation with a student’s academic achievement (Patrikakou, 2005).

Parental involvement comes in many different forms and does not reflect just one set of activities. Such diverse activities as volunteering in the classroom, communicating with the teacher, participating in academic-related activities at home, communicating the positive value of education, and participating in the parent-teacher relationship are all included in parental school involvement, and each is related to school performance (Epstein & Sanders, 2009; Hill & Craft, 2003). This study will take on parental school involvement by taking these diverse factors into account and what it means to a diverse group of families.

For the school and family partnership to be successful, regardless of identity, the interpersonal relationship must be at the forefront and provide a solid foundation between the school and the family. Goodman states, “the way to establish this is first and foremost (to) make no assumptions about the family” (2002). Additionally, both parties, especially the school must show an interest and be open to learning about each family’s diverse culture (Gartrell, 2012).
When teachers are working with diverse families, the teacher should always remain interested in each family’s culture and seek unique characteristics about all individual cultures. This practice will promote a positive relationship and participation in the classroom (Rapp et al., 2011). If teachers are unable to make such a connection, the school-home relationship is in peril. A study conducted by McCoach et al. (2010) found that a lack of knowledge around the diverse cultural backgrounds in the classroom on the teacher’s part resulted in the lack of parental involvement. Understanding another’s cultural background can be a challenge for anyone, including teachers, but it is something that is necessary, parents become more reserved when becoming involved at their child’s school if the teacher does not understand their cultural background (McCoach et al., 2010).

Organizational Barriers. Much of the literature above has explored the importance of parental involvement in the education of children to achieve academic excellence (Epstein, 1995; Fan & Chen, 2001). It is necessary, however, to acknowledge the challenges that parents face getting in their child’s school and programs (Byrd, 2011; Moore, 1990; Okeke, 2014; Yoder & Lopez, 2013). In some instances, parents may not be involved in school activities due to barriers experienced in being engaged with and understanding processes of the educational institutions within which their children are learning (Okeke, 2014; Yoder & Lopez, 2013).

In a descriptive case study research conducted by Okeke (2014), a group of thirty parents of children that attended one of the primary schools located in the London area of England was interviewed and asked how to improve parental involvement. The focus of the study was to examine the level of parental involvement in the schooling of their children. Okeke’s conclusions indicated that “most parents do not always know how to get involved.” Additional results revealed many parents want to get involved, but some can be overwhelmed by the operational
structures within the school. Okeke’s study settles that to effectively involve parents in the businesses of the school, as well as in their children’s education, certain approaches must be popularized within the school. Okeke recommends that parents be made aware of the approaches for their involvement in children’s education if such approaches are to be effective.

It is helpful to explore some specific barriers to parental involvement that have been identified in the literature. Okeke (2014) found that parental involvement was significantly impeded by a lack of time, lack of childcare, no school-parent welcoming policy, little parental understanding of how to get involved, and intimidating school operational structures. Furthermore, Yoder and Lopez (2013) discover that language barriers, family resource limitations, the immaturity of the parent due to their age, and feelings of marginalization, create an intimidating obstruction between the school and parents. Lastly, Byrd (2011) adds educational jargon to the list of observed barriers to parental involvement.

Moore (1990) gives attention to models and methods to conceptualize meaningful parent participation in the education of their children and themselves, the need for innovation in family-school partnerships, and barriers to parent participation. Moore reports that such models include “Those derived from early childhood education and school partnerships with parents as policymakers, as volunteers in the program, and as facilitators of children's development.” Moore noted five barriers that include: physical or psychological distance between teachers and parents, lack of educators’ professional development, ethnicity and socio-economic status biases, limited views of parental participation, and perceptions of the school as limited to the provision of instruction. The model stresses the formation of partnership and collaboration between schools and parents is dramatically different from the way in which our nation views its schools. Moore concludes that if students are to meet new academic challenges and obtain success, the
nation's schools must develop to the point where parents and schools maximize each other's knowledge and abilities. A partnership between parents and schools could greatly contribute to a system in which a greater number of children arrive at school each day ready to receive an education.

Given the barrier described above, there is no shortage of work to be done improving the readiness of schools to increase parental involvement. To overcome the barriers preventing parental involvement, Wherry (2009) suggests schools need to provide a welcoming climate where the school staff is respectful and responsive to parents. It is critical that administrators and teachers encourage respectful two-way communication between the school and home (Wherry, 2009). Bouie, an educational consultant stated, “The answer is to stop treating parents like ‘clients’ and start treating them like ‘partners’ in helping children learn” (Wherry, 2009, p. 7). Understanding families more as people may better open the lines of communication and engender the type of community relationships and parental involvement that increase student learning.

**Theoretical Framework: Epstein’s Model of School Family and Community Partnerships**

Joyce Epstein's School-Family-Community Partnership Model is an influential model used to examine and define the relationship between schools, families, and communities. This serves as one of overlapping spheres of influence relating to success of the child. Epstein’s framework will serve as the theoretical model for this study, providing a base of previous research, support, a benchmark to measure the qualitative findings against, and to aid in the data analysis process. As a framework for increasing participation in education, the model recognizes six types of educational involvement and provides rationales and strategies for schools, families, and communities to actively engage in and participate in the success of the student. This study
too, qualitative in design, will analyze student and teacher perspectives providing insight into understanding parental and school involvement relating to student success.

To examine school, family, and community involvement, Epstein’s theory of overlapping spheres of influence and six types of involvement is used to investigate the multitude of ways school personnel are involved in promoting school, family, and community engagement (Epstein, 1987). Epstein’s theory states students have a better rate of succeeding at higher levels when the internal and external models of influence overlap to promote student engagement, development, and learning. The internal and external models have different characteristics when it comes to student achievement. The internal model relates to the interpersonal relations that occur while at school, home, or outside in the community influencing student success. The external model hinges on the working relationships between the student’s home life, school life, and life outside in the community all working together for the common good of the student (Epstein et al., 2002).

Under Epstein’s theory of overlapping spheres, interaction can occur in multiple ways, either at the institutional or individual level. At the institutional level, interactions can be classified as inviting families into the school for an event, such as a PTA sponsored event, curriculum night, or parent night. At the individual level, a parent teacher conference serves at the involvement between the two participants or at an individual level (Epstein et al.). The two types of interactions are categorized under what is known as the six types of involvement, or activities developed to promote involvement between the school, family, and community that is tied to the school’s mission and vision (Epstein, 1995; Epstein & Sanders, 2006). The six types of involvement interactions that operate within the theory of overlapping spheres act as a framework for organizing behaviors, roles, and actions performed by school personnel, family,
and community members working together to increase involvement and student achievement (Epstein, 1995; Epstein et al., 2002). The following paragraphs define the six types of involvement.

**Parenting.** The first type of involvement is parenting and includes helping families with basic parenting skills, encouraging home conditions to support children in the educational process, and assisting schools to understand families. Schools can assist families in meeting their responsibilities as parents of children at every age level by providing activities that increase their knowledge and strengthen their skills to influence their child’s growth and development (Epstein et al., 2009). Activities that may strengthen parents’ understanding of development, assist with parenting skills, and improve home conditions that may support learning may include but are not limited to family support programs, parent education workshops, and home visits (Epstein, 2009). Activities should include information for parents and from parents about their families (Epstein et al., 2009). It is critical to provide information to all families, not just the families who attend the workshops or meetings at school. Often families who do not attend or cannot attend are the families who have the greatest need for the information (Epstein, 2009).

It is important for schools to gather information from families to help educators understand students and their families, including their backgrounds, goals, strengths, and needs (Epstein, 2009). When parents share this type of information with the school, it creates an awareness of challenges in parenting and builds a strong and trustworthy relationship between the family and the educators (Epstein, 2009). A challenge associated with parenting is ensuring that all information sent to families is clear, useful, and relevant regarding the success of each child in the school. This can be a difficult task as the abilities and needs within the school may be
greatly diverse and varied (Epstein, 2001). Students, parents, and schools can benefit with successful parenting practices in place.

Student attendance can improve when families are informed of policies and are involved (Epstein, 2009). Students can have an increased awareness of the importance of school and respect for education (Epstein et al., 2009). Parents can benefit from successful parenting practices by increasing their knowledge of each development stage in their child’s life, which can increase self-confidence about parenting (Epstein, 2009). With successful parenting practices in place, parents may have a greater feeling of support from the school and other parents (Epstein, 2009). Educators and schools can also benefit from successful parenting practices by increasing their understanding of families and the goals and concerns families have for their children. Educators can gain respect for students’ and their families’ strengths, needs, and background (Epstein, 2009).

**Communication.** Communicating refers to parent-initiated and school-initiated contact regarding school programs and student progress. Communication is defined by Epstein (2009) as the ability to design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and student progress. Useful and clear two-way communication encourages cooperation between the home and school and reveals to students that contact is being made between the home and school monitor student success (Epstein et al., 2009).

There are multiple ways to produce effective communication between the home and the school including conferences, PTA meetings, weekly or monthly folders of student work, handbooks, parent pick up of report cards, notes, emails, newsletters, phone calls, and websites (Epstein, 2009). Any time communication is involved there will likely be challenges.
Communication must be clear and useful and schools need to be considerate of factors such as language barriers and literacy of families that could affect the understanding of the information being shared (Epstein, 2009). An increasing number of schools are using technological resources as a means of communication; however, it is important to remember that all families may not have access to these technological resources (Epstein et al., 2009). Effective communication between the home and school yields numerous positive results.

Students benefit from an awareness of their progress in specific subjects and skills. When students are involved in the communication process, they are more knowledgeable of the actions required to maintain or improve their grades (Epstein et al., 2009). Involvement in the communication process can also make students more aware of their role in the education process and give students more responsibility over their educational success (Epstein, 2009).

Parents benefit from effective communication with the school by having increased knowledge of policies, procedures, and programs within the school, allowing the parents to provide additional support in the educational experience (Epstein, 2009). As parents communicate with the school they typically become more comfortable and satisfied with the school and the teachers (Epstein et al., 2009). Through effective and positive communication among staff, teachers, and administrators, parents encourage a successful educational experience for their children and may become more actively involved in their success (Epstein, 2009).

Schools benefit from clear and effective communication with families. Communication, whether written or oral, gives parents a better understanding of policies, procedures, and programs within the school, which allows for additional support of the school (Epstein, 2009). Clear communication between families and schools encourages the use of parents’ networks to communicate with all families within the community (Epstein et al., 2009).
**Volunteering.** The third type of involvement, volunteering, is defined as recruiting and organizing people to assist and support the school and the students (Epstein, 2009). Volunteering is more than being present at the school and offering assistance during the day, but consists of supporting the goals of the school and the learning process in any way, in any place, and at any time (Epstein et al., 2009). As the demands of families have increased with work hours, overwhelming schedules, and other responsibilities, some families have difficulty scheduling time to volunteer at the school during normal school hours (Epstein et al., 2009).

Volunteers serve in many areas to support the school program and the student’s work and activities, allowing educators and families to work together in the child’s education. Volunteer activities include recruiting and training volunteers, arranging schedules, locations, and activities for volunteers, and recognizing parents who serve as an audience for student events and performances (Epstein et al., 2009). Volunteers serve in schools or classrooms by assisting students, teachers, or administrators as aides, tutors, coaches, lecturers, chaperones, boosters, mentors, and in many other ways (Epstein, 2009). Volunteers serve as an audience by attending assemblies, performances, sporting events, recognition events, award ceremonies, celebrations, and other student activities (Epstein, 2009). Volunteers serve the schools or classrooms by assisting school programs and student activities in any location and at any time (Epstein et al., 2009).

Many schools have volunteers, but often there are a small number of people who continue to offer their time (Epstein, 2009). One of the many challenges to volunteer programs is to recruit a wide variety of people so that all families know they are valued as volunteers (Epstein et al., 2009). Schools need to provide volunteers with appropriate training, enabling the volunteers to successfully and effectively serve the school and the students (Epstein, 2009). With
time being an issue in many families, schools need to create flexible schedules to provide training and allow volunteers to assist the school programs and the educational experience (Epstein et al., 2009).

There is much to be gained from effective volunteer programs. With volunteer programs in schools, students may be tutored or taught by volunteers, emphasizing the importance of educational success (Epstein, 2009). Due to additional adult interaction, students may learn more effective communication skills with adults (Epstein, 2009).

By having volunteers in classrooms and in schools, the role of the teacher becomes evident and appreciated by parents and other volunteers (Epstein et al., 2009). Volunteer opportunities give parents and community members increased self-confidence in their ability to work with children and the school setting. Enrollment in programs to improve their own education and to prepare for jobs in the field of education may be prompted through volunteer experiences with the school (Epstein et al., 2009).

The adult to child ratio increases when volunteers assist educators and allows educators to provide more individual attention to students. As parents become more involved, educators and parents may become more confident and comfortable with each other, which may encourage educators to involve families in many new ways, not just as volunteers (Epstein et al., 2009).

**Learning at home.** Learning at home is the fourth type of involvement described by Epstein and refers to providing ideas to families on ways to assist their children in learning activities at home including homework and other curriculum related activities, decision-making, and planning (Epstein et al., 2009). Learning at home activities that encourage children to share and discuss assignments and ideas with family members support two-way connections between
the home and the school regarding the curriculum and other school related activities (Epstein, 2009). When families provide encouragement to their children, children are more likely to be actively involved in setting goals for educational success and in planning postsecondary educational experiences (Epstein, 2009).

Learning at home activities include information about how to help children with homework and improve skills in various subjects (Epstein, 2009). Students should be encouraged to discuss with their parents, the activities they are involved in and demonstrate what they are learning in class. When learning at home activities are effectively designed and implemented, students are more likely to complete their homework assignments, improve their skills, and parents may be more aware and involved in school curriculum, (Epstein, 2009).

Learning at home activities can be extremely beneficial to the learning experience of students, but can be difficult to design and implement (Epstein et al., 2009). Implementing interactive homework on a regular basis to allow students to discuss ideas and demonstrate skills with the family can be challenging and time consuming. Many parents are not involved and are unaware of activities and skills being taught in the classroom (Epstein, 2009). Many parents are uninformed of homework assignments and ways to assist their children with homework and other curriculum related activities (Epstein, 2009). Parents can be a significant tool in encouraging students to complete homework assignments and other activities, in setting personal goals for success in school and in preparing for postsecondary education or work (Epstein, 2009). When learning at home activities are effectively designed and implemented, results can be expected among students, parents, and educators. With the encouragement of families at home, students’ skills, abilities, and test scores can be expected to rise (Epstein et al., 2009). Parent awareness of homework policies and procedures can increase the completion of homework
assignments by students. As parents support the educational experience, children may view the parent as an advocate, resulting in increased self-confidence in personal ability and attitude towards school (Epstein, 2009).

When parents are involved in academic activities, there may be an increased appreciation for the teaching profession and the role of the teacher (Epstein et al., 2009). Parents may benefit from involvement in learning at home activities by having a better understanding of the curriculum and skills the children are learning, making it easier to assist children with curriculum related activities throughout the year (Epstein et al., 2009). Learning at home activities may escalate discussions within the home regarding school, classwork, homework, and future educational plans (Epstein, 2009).

Educators and schools may also profit from these types of activities by experiencing a boost in family involvement and support of the educational process (Epstein, 2009). Educators and schools may also recognize a rise in motivation of students from all racial and ethnic backgrounds with reinforcement in the home (Epstein et al., 2009).

Decision making. Epstein has identified decision making as including families in school decision making and developing parent leaders and representatives within the school (Epstein et al., 2009). By allowing parents to represent the school in leadership roles, parent leaders can assist families and the community in understanding and contributing ideas to support school programs (Epstein, 2009). Parents and educators have a shared interest in the educational experience of students, and collaboration between parents and educators regarding school issues can enhance the experiences of the children (Epstein et al., 2009).
Decision-making activities allow parents to contribute ideas regarding school plans and policies. Parents can serve as representatives on the school council, school improvement teams, PTA, PTO, advisory groups, and other committees. Many families want their opinions and ideas to be represented in the schools; but, most families do not want to serve on committees or in leadership roles (Epstein, 2009).

As schools involve parents in decision making activities, it is important to include parents from all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other sectors from within the school population (Epstein et al., 2009). Parent leaders should be active participants and represent other families from the school, and it is imperative that parent leaders obtain ideas from families to share with the school and distribute information to the families they represent regarding school decisions, programs, and activities (Epstein, 2009). Schools need to offer appropriate training for the parent leaders to assist in developing their leadership skills and properly represent other families (Epstein et al., 2009). An important component in upper grades would be to include student representatives on committees and within organizations (Epstein et al., 2009).

With the involvement of families in the school decision making process, students become aware that families’ views are valued and represented in the school. Students can benefit in multiple ways from the direct family influence of parents serving on committees and in organizations (Epstein et al., 2009). Families become more aware of policies, programs, and activities and gain a sense of respect within the school when involved in the decision-making process which can increase a parent’s self-confidence, encouraging their ability to support their child’s education (Epstein, 2009). When involving parents in decision making, educators may gain insight to families’ perspectives regarding policies and school decisions (Epstein et al.,
When educators and families collaborate in decision making, educators can gain respect for families and their ability to represent the school in leadership roles (Epstein et al., 2009).

**Collaborating with the community.** Collaborating with the community refers to coordinating resources and services from the community for families, students, and the school to support learning (Epstein et al., 2009). Effectively collaborating with the community supports the school and reinforces relations with businesses in the local community (Epstein, 2001). Community is defined by Epstein (2009) as those interested in, or influenced by, the quality of education; not just those families with children in the school. The community is comprised of everyone influencing the educational experiences of students, not just those living in neighborhoods near or around the school (Epstein et al., 2009).

Community activities integrate additional resources, programs, and services with school programs to support learning (Epstein, 2009). The community can contribute to students, schools, and families by offering services through business partnerships, cultural organizations, health services, recreational centers, senior citizen programs, faith-based programs, governmental agencies, and other groups (Epstein et al., 2009). These community organizations can provide mentoring, tutoring, after school care, and volunteer services to support schools and the development of children. Schools, students, and families can contribute to the community through service learning projects and other special projects while sharing their talents and working together on local issues (Epstein, 2009). A challenge for schools may be ensuring equal opportunities for everyone and informing all families of services offered within the community (Epstein et al., 2009).

When schools collaborate with the community, students can enrich their knowledge, skills, and talents from curricular and extracurricular experiences or explorations (Epstein et al.,
2009). Often, students gain self-confidence and ownership of the community in which they live by collaborating in activities within the community (Epstein et al., 2009). Families may benefit from schools collaborating with the community by experiencing increased knowledge and gaining the use of resources within the community to develop skills and obtain services for their family (Epstein, 2009). Community collaboration also allows families to work together to strengthen their relationships and build a sense of ownership within the community (Epstein et al., 2009).

Administrators and other educators may not live in or near the community where they work. Collaboration may increase their knowledge of the community and introduce resources in the community that may enhance the curriculum and enrich student experiences (Epstein et al., 2009). Collaborating with the community may be especially beneficial for educators in identifying local resources and services when assisting families having children with special needs (Epstein et al., 2009).

Summary

This review of literature focused on the changes in education over the last 300 plus years and the shifts the education community has seen in parental involvement. Parental involvement served as the primary focus of this chapter and begun with the history of parental involvement in education in America. As the United States established its own identity and freedom from British rule, education was provided by the parents in the home and was heavily influenced by religion and family values. As the country matured, leaders thought best that the education of children be delivered in a public setting and provided by professional teachers, not their parents. This shift in education did not happen automatically, but took time to evolve and eventually became common
practice. With the transformation of education in America, schools transformed from locally controlled one room schoolhouses serving multiple grades into grade schools with professional teachers with grade specific curriculums. During these stages in American education, parental involvement was highly supported in the earlier years and saw a decline during the Industrial Era (Hiatt-Michael, 1994).

In today’s educational system, the education field has seen legislation passed that influences the education of children and has a direct impact on the level of parental involvement. No Child Left Behind was passed in 2001 and added to the existing Title 1 laws around parental involvement. It became mandatory for schools to actively establish ties with the community. As a higher level of focus was placed on parental involvement, schools, parents, teachers, and communities looked for ways to interact and build relationships that would directly impact the success of the students. No Child left behind was replaced with Every Student Succeeds Act, which has provided additional information and requirements around parental involvement. Many have seen the success of parental involvement. However, parental involvement has not been without obstacles impeding the establishments of relationships. Numerous barriers have limited the growth of parental involvement in schools.

Serving as the guiding research and theoretical framework for this study, Joyce Epstein’s, School-Family-Community Partnerships defined six types of involvement that shape school, family, and community involvement to benefit students and lead to success. Joyce Epstein outlined strategies for student success by elaborating on key factors such as parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. Joyce Epstein’s School-Family-Community Partnership set the structure for this qualitative study as well as supported the findings in this study.
Chapter 3 – Methodology and Methods

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the educational lives and success of fifth grade students as it relates to the involvement of their parents and school. This study was qualitative in nature due to the importance of personal accounts relating to findings and recommendations. The primary research question was, “How does parental and school involvement relate to student success?” Imbedded within the primary question was two secondary research questions including “How do student narratives differ from those of teachers?” and “How is responsibility framed within the school/family relationship?” The narrative methodology I used served as an entry point into the students and teacher’s life and experiences in education. By investigating the stories surrounding school experience, parental involvement, and student outcomes, powerful themes emerged which can help parents, teachers and students create better relationships to foster student success.

Qualitative Traditions and Lenses

The study consists of a narrative framework that afforded the opportunity to learn more about the educational life of three students and two teachers and how their individual perspectives led to unique viewpoints concerning education in today’s society. The research design included how data was collected, where the data originated, and the data analysis procedures. In the upcoming sections, I explain my role, position, and beliefs as a researcher and how I monitored my bias.
Narrative Inquiry

“In this view of [participants’] knowledge, [participants] know their lives in terms of stories. They live stories, tell stories of those lives, retell stories with changed possibilities, and relived the changed stories. In this narrative view of teachers’ knowledge, we mean more than teachers’ telling stories of specific children and events. We mean that their way of being in the classroom is storied: As teachers they are characters in their own stories of teaching, which they author.” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, p. 2-14)

The passage above demonstrates of the power of the narrative method to express meaning and value within the lives of participants. “Experience happens narratively. Narrative inquiry is a form of narrative experience. Therefore, educational experiences should be studied narratively” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.19). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) place importance on the observation that narrative inquiry in educational settings is much more than listening to an individual’s story; rather it is about uncovering the meaning behind their words. For this study, narratives served as the entry point for examining the role that parental involvement has on student success. Parental involvement is only one factor that plays a role in a student’s life and it is one that can vary greatly student by student and school by school. The factors that relate to parental involvement are complex and are more than typically known stereotypes. For students, the level of achievement and parental involvement is intensified by the surrounding community, school, and social stigmas. Due to various factors, parental involvement varies greatly and takes shape based on internal and external factors. The stories told by the students and teachers ultimately sheds light on parental involvement and how the guardian and school can improve student success in the future.

A narrative methodology is the obvious choice for this study because life-imbedded personal accounts served as the primary data source for this study. I learned a great deal more
about how diverse students navigate their school day, upon waking, going to school, and after school, on a daily basis. The choices the students make throughout the day, and what factors influence their decisions, can ultimately play a key role in their success. Such factors as, home life, parental involvement, mindset, relationships at school, and work ethic. Guardians have the ability to play a key role in the level of student success, so it was interesting to learn more about what drives or holds them back in influencing their student achievement. Through individual’s narratives, a snapshot was formed of their past and how experiences shaped their current actions and views.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study was Epstein’s Six Types of Parent Involvement. This framework assists educators in developing strong school and family partnership programs. Parents, schools, and communities have a shared interest and responsibility in educating children (Epstein et al., 2009). Epstein’s school-family-community partnership model emphasizes the roles of the school, the family, and the community in working collaboratively to influence the development and learning of children (Epstein et al., 2009). Epstein referred to this partnership model as an overlapping influence between the school, family, and community in educating children in an effort to achieve academic success (Epstein, 1995).

The six types of involvement are: Parenting: helping all families establish home environments to support children as students, Communicating: design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school, Volunteering: recruit and organize parent help and support, Learning at home: to provide information and ideas to families about how to help, Decision making: include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives, and Collaborating with the community: identify and integrate resources and services from the
community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student. Each factor of the Epstein’s framework plays a pivotal role in in the working of a school community as it relates to the wellbeing of the student.

While a strong partnership between the school, family, and community are important to the models to achieve identified goals and the overall success of the collaboration; ultimately, the students are the main focus and the reason for the school, families, and community partnering together to build student success. It is important to remember that this model is not primarily designed to produce successful students, but to provide them with the resources to achieve the success on their own unique terms. "School and family partnerships do not ‘produce’ successful students, rather, the partnership activities that include teachers, parents, and students engage, guide, energize, and motivate students so that they produce their own success." (Epstein, 2001, p. 161).

**Conceptual Lens**

Each one of the factors helped to frame the interview process in which the students and teachers participated, but the conceptual lens focused on Learning at Home and Parenting (two narrower elements of the theoretical frame). After the narrative was collected from the participants, the personal accounts were organized into themes based on Epstein’s Six Types of Parental Involvement and shaped the recommendations that concluded the dissertation as suggestions for teachers, parents and education professionals.

**Interview Design**

Because the narrative method calls for personal accounts to tell a story and provide recommendations, interviews were used as the data collection strategy for this qualitative inquiry
The interview protocol for this study was designed to collect personal accounts in relation to how students interpret their education and guardian involvement in their education, and contrastingly, how teachers view the student and their guardian’s involvement. The research questions focused on the students’ school day, from the time they woke up, throughout the school day, dismissal from school, and to how they end their evening at home. Other questions focused on the guardians’ interactions with the student and what key factors played a pivotal role in those interactions. For instance, one question asked the participant about the guardian’s motivation or hindrances when it came to participating in the student’s education. There are four lead in question in total, but other questions were asked and were prompted by the participants’ responses to the four main questions.

Additionally, a bracketing and participant-observer interview was conducted. Due to the nature of the participants’ narratives being intertwined with that of the researcher, serving as participant-observer, it was imperative that extra attention was taken to monitor bias meanwhile extracting information regarding the educational lives of the participants. A seasoned qualitative researcher performed the interview, which was then transcribed and used as a data source. Questions were designed to illicit responses that provided additional information that helped to fill in any gaps caused by telescoping or memory fade among participants (discussed further under limitations).

**Participants**

Participants were purposefully selected as traditionally seen in a qualitative study. The selection was based on characteristics of the population and the objective of the study. Students

(Creswell, 1998; Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Lichtman, 2006).
were required to be in the fifth grade, at the same school, and taught by the same teacher. In addition to the previous student criteria, a high performing, average, and low performing student were selected. The Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) a nationally normed test, was used to identifying possible student participants. The diversity of the students was also an intentional focus of the study to mirror the current diversity at the research site. The teacher in this study must teach at the same school and teach all three students that participate in the interview. This criteria was used to help narrow in on targeted information structures by Epstein’s Six Types of Parental Involvement. Additionally, I included myself as a participant-observer through the use of an interview conducted by another researcher and analyzed as an additional data source.

To generate potential participants, I spoke with the Dean of Students at the research site to gain her cooperation and feedback as to which students and teachers would be valuable selections. Potential candidates were contacted via email. This communication was used to introduce myself, explain the study, and gain their permission to participate in the study. The study consisted of three students and two teachers all from the same school. A follow up email was sent after the initial email. This email served as a thank you for the participants’ willingness to participate in the study and to schedule a day and time to conduct the interview.

Research Site

Participants in this study vary in race, age, gender, socioeconomic status, and presumed parental involvement, but attend the same school and are in the same classes. The diverse elementary school served as the research site that is located in a major city in a southeastern state. Along with being a diverse school, the school is a locally approved charter that has been in existence for four years. Current enrollment at this Title I School is 243 students, with students
ranging from Kindergarten to fifth grade. As the school grows to eighth grade by the year 2020 it will add an additional forty two students each school year through a public lottery system.

The teachers and staff are diverse and vary in age, race, gender, sexual orientation, soci-economic status, education, and teaching experience. There are nineteen certified teachers on staff, with twelve of those teachers being in the classroom full time. Of the nineteen certified educators on staff, each one holds a higher education degree beyond a bachelor’s degree.

**Researcher’s Positionality**

My path into education is not a familiar one to many educators. I did not grow up wanting to be an educator. I did not dream about a classroom full of students, but rather focused on the art of photography and design. When I came to realize my position in education, it was two art teachers from high school that had a lasting impression on me and have been my mentors as I serve the education community today.

I struggled as a student while growing up. I was not a high achieving student and nor was I an average student. I was a below average student who struggled to process and retain information. Due to my struggles, I did not form a great liking towards school or desire to achieve. Throughout my years in school my parents were mildly involved in my education; but, never really pushed me to complete my homework, make me study, or go above and beyond like they did with my sister who excelled academically. Despite of my parents’ role in my education, they did push me to pursue in sports, an area where I flourished, and I had a very typical childhood.

It was not until my time in higher education that I placed an emphasis on setting goals and achieving academically. During this time I had to rely on myself and not outside motivating
factors such as my parents, teachers, or school. It was when I became an educator that I reflected on my time as a student and the level of parental involvement that I had in my life. Now that I have an understanding of the level of parental involvement in my education, I have been able to create a scope and lens for the varying levels of parental involvement that are evident in our school system today. Throughout my time in the classroom, teaching at multiple schools, and currently serving as an administrator, I have experienced a wide variety of parental involvement and have witnessed the effects.

**Entry and Reciprocity**

I am currently a professional in the education field and have a connection to the education institution from which the participants were selected. To make the interview process seamless and yield a higher level of effective personal accounts, I selected students with whom I have a relationship. To initiate communication with the participants, I started by sending an email to their guardian, with a greeting, introduction, information about the study, and intention to gain their and the minor’s initial interest in the study. Based on the response, I sent a follow up email with the consent and assent forms. Once receiving the forms, the interviewed day, time, and place was established. The communication with the teacher participant mirrored the same process as that used with the guardian and minor, without the accent form.

The interview took place on a mutually convenient day, time, and location for all participants. While the minor is being interviewed, the guardian was on campus, but in a separate location. This set up is necessary for the student to feel at ease while being interviewed. While the teacher is being interviewed, the student and the parent were not present. Interviews
consisted of four lead-in questions, additional follow up questions based on the participants initial response, and lasted for approximately thirty minutes.

The participants stand to gain a better understanding of their position within education, the influence they have on each other, possible outcomes that can improve the success of the student, and build a strong relationship between guardians and schools. Each participant was made aware of this benefit at the start of each interview, all participates understood that the benefit was mutual and could aid in helping all parties involved.

**Data Collection**

The center of this research study hinges on the data collection process and responses from the participants. The narrative response from the data collection process sheds light on parental involvement and as it relates to student success. The experiences of the participants told a story, Creswell mentioned, a focus on telling the stories of lived experience dictated that interviewing was the most powerful data collection strategy. Each participant shared their unique point of view during the one-on-one interview lasting approximately thirty minutes. Each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed. Additional field notes were taken to account for additional information that could not be digitally recorded. During the interview, open-ended questions from the interview protocol were used to initiate lead-in questions with follow-up questions based on the participant responses. These follow-up questions were used to further gauge and interpret meaning and positionality about the participant’s perspective and information provided. Qualitative data regarding participant feelings about certain events or non-events helped tell a richer story of those happenings rather than simply reporting the occurrence itself (Creswell, 2002).
Data Analysis

The initial data collection began after completing all interviews and started the process of data analysis. I organized the data by individual participant. Each student and teacher has a file including the auditory recording and field notes documenting my observations from the interview that cannot be auditory recorded. Lastly, the files contain a complete transcription of the participant’s interview.

I used a clean transcript when transcribing each interview (Elliot, 2005). Transcribing with a clean transcript each time eliminates the pauses, intonations, false starts, and utterances that are common in everyday speech. A clean transcript allowed the focus to be on the content of the participant’s words and made the transcript easy to read. Once completed, the coding of the data began.

I conducted an initial coding of the data, initial coding defines what is present in the data. The process of coding answered, what does my data actually show? Close reading was used in the coding process. Close reading is the process in which researchers do to create representative of the data and uncover ideas as grounded theory coding (Charmaz, 2006; Glesne, 2011; Merriam, 2009). Through this method, I avoid developing biased assignment of categories to the data; instead I created a code based on what the data reflected. I followed recommendations from Charmaz (2006), coding lines using gerunds and describing the data by action. Planning community service, naming self as outsider, questioning freedom of information are all good examples of initial coding. To complete the initial coding, transcripts were coded, by hand, using line by line and incident to incident techniques (Charmaz, 2014). After initial coding axial and thematic coding help essentialize themes and elucidate findings.
Verification and Trustworthiness

The validity of a qualitative study can be strengthened by various strategies. Creswell (2009) suggests that qualitative researchers should use at least one, if not multiple strategies. The strategies are as follows: triangulation, member checking, bias clarification, reporting of negative or discrepant information, prolonged time in the field, peer debriefing, and the use of an external auditor. This study on education factors centers on three of these techniques including triangulation, member checking, and bias clarification.

**Triangulation.** Data triangulation validates and increases the credibility of data and research by cross-verifying the similar information. Triangulation involves using different “data sources of information by examining evidence from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification for themes” (Creswell, 2009, p.191). This strategy recommended by Creswell is one of importance due to its ability to validate and highlight information that I noted and found to be important to all participants in the study. In addition to common themes, inconsistencies in the interviews were easily recognized. Noticeable themes from the interview were validated by triangulation.

**Member checking.** Member checking involves the participants as a source of thematic analysis of the data to validate the accuracy of the findings (Creswell, 2009). I used member checking three times during data collection and analysis. Initial transcripts were emailed to the adult participants and given in person to the minor so the transcriptions could be validated for accuracy based on the interview that took place. After the verified transcripts were coded and clustered, the thematic analysis was shared with all of the participants, adults via email and minors were informed in person. After the verification of the transcript, essential themes and patterns were identified from the code clusters. After a rich description of the events was
documented, this too was shared with the participants for verification. Through the process of returning and validating findings to the participants, there is a small percentage that the information can be of bias interpretation or skewing of the data.

**Bias Clarification: Bracketing.** Bracketing serves as a clarifying strategy for bias for two purposes in this study. First, identifying my own biases associated with removing myself from the predisposed focus during data collection and analysis. Second, describing my own beliefs regarding the purpose of parental involvement and students’ success ultimately enables the reader to consider the source when reading and analyzing this study. To accomplish these two goals, a peer assisted me with a bracketing interview (i.e. Kimmel & Crawford, 2000).

**Delimitations**

The delimitations of this study are represented by the criterion required for participation in the study. This study observed only individuals who 1) attend particular school in a southeastern major city charter school, 2) have been at said school for the entire school year, 3) in the 5th grade, and 4) all taught by the same teacher. For this study, a group of participants comprised of six individuals overall: three students, two teachers, and one academic professional were used in this study. These participants were selected due to their academic ability, social and emotional well-being, and my familiarity with the student.

**Limitations**

Limitations within the study are summarized by the narrow scope of the results this study produced. Conducting a study on three students, two teachers, and one academic professional, overall the six participants yielded limited results that cannot impact a wide spectrum of people; but, offer suggestions for improving parental involvement as it relates to student success in
education. While this information can be used to influence students, teachers, parents, and schools, the findings should not be considered generalizable to all education circumstances. Additionally, the memories of students may be greatly suspect to telescoping, a phenomena wherein past events are overstated, and memory fade, a phenomena where past events are understated. The participant-observer interview was designed to help triangulate student responses, but also may be suspect to telescoping and memory fade.
Chapter 4 – Participant Stories

There were six participants in the study serving as either a student or education professional; three students, two teachers, and myself as the curriculum coach to the students and teachers in this study. All participants came from the same elementary school in a major southeast city. The two teachers are departmentalized, one teacher taught science and math and the other taught language arts and social studies. All the individuals who participated in this study did so willingly, and assisted in the data analysis by confirming researcher-identified coding. In the forthcoming information, I briefly narrated the stories of each participant’s personal viewpoint on education and their role in the educational experience. To ensure the privacy and protection of the participants, pseudonyms and vague descriptions were used. In Chapters five and six, a deeper analysis of the narratives and emergent themes present themselves.

Student Participant Stories

Jason. Jason is an eleven year old, Caucasian male who comes from a middle-class family with two siblings; both are older brothers. Jason moved to Georgia from Virginia two years ago with his family. Jason’s biological parents are married, serve as his guardians, and both work full-time. Jason’s father works in technology for a security firm and his mother has her own business. Jason is the overall top academic performing student in his grade level. He is a socially active student with many friends, involved in numerous after school activities, and invests time in his local community. Jason has been at the current school for the past two years, he entered as a fourth grader.
When Jason’s parents selected a city, they looked for one that embodied a high level of diversity. The family settled into a community that has been, and continues to, be revitalized by its inhabitants after years of poverty. Jason and his family are active members in the community. When looking for a school for Jason, his parents wanted a diverse setting that would offer him a well-rounded, culture rich environment for learning. After finding Jason’s current school, they went through the lottery process for admission as did all his classmates.

Jason is currently a fifth grade student who excels academically, on the sports field, and in music. Jason is a leader in his grade. He is consistently volunteering for activities that result in bettering the lives of his peers and community. Academically, Jason loves math, "I am good at it…it interests me,” when he was asked why he likes it so much. While at school, Jason looks for ways to help and build relationships with his peers, teachers, and school staff. Outside of school, Jason enjoys playing football, watching Tom Brady and the New England Patriots, and playing the piano. Jason’s classmates look up to Jason. While on the 5th grade field trip to Savannah this year, several of his classmates encouraged him to play the piano. Jason was fortunate to play the piano for his classmates and teachers in one of the oldest churches in Savannah.

Ryan. On a typical day, you will find Ryan wearing his Ole Miss football sweatshirt to school. Ryan is a self-described Ole Miss fan and loves sports of all kinds. Ryan is an eleven year old Caucasian male who comes from an upper middle class family. Ryan has two younger siblings, a sister and brother, who both go to the same school. Ryan’s biological parents are still married and serve as his guardians. Ryan’s dad works full time in commercial real estate and mom works part-time for a local church. Ryan and his family live in a diverse community in a large southeast city. Ryan is an average academically performing student when compared to his
current peers. Ryan is a very socially accepted student who enjoys bonding with his peers and the school staff. Ryan has attended his current school since it opened four years ago.

Ryan’s parents are stronger supporters of the school and are founding members since the school’s establishment in 2013. Ryan’s mother is the school’s Co-Chair for the Community Council, active volunteer, and is present at all school board meetings. Ryan’s parents had to make a tough decision in relation to his education due to his current school only offering educational services through the 8th grade. After Ryan completed his fifth grade school year, his parents decided to enroll him in a private school in the area. This is a common practice by many families in the community. The local schools, including elementary, middle, and high, perform below average in the school district. Often times because of this statistic, parents enroll their students in local private schools.

**Sara.** Sara is an eleven year old African American female who comes from a middle class family. Sara has an older brother who is an educator in the same community as Sara’s current school and where Sara and her family reside. Sara’s biological parents are still married and serve as her guardians. Both of Sara’s parents work full-time, her mom is a chef and her father works for a hair care company. Sara is academically below average when compared to her peers at school. Sara does not receive special education services nor has a 504 in place for accommodations (an educational plan that provides assistance in the areas of weakness defined by an educational team to support the student); but, does benefit from small group instruction during the academic school day. Sara is a vibrant young lady who has a healthy social life and has great relationships with the school personnel. Sara is an active participant at school and partakes in numerous extracurricular activities after school.
Sara has been attending her current school for the past four years. Her parents are founding members of the school. Sara’s parents are large supporters of the school, but are unfortunately not visually active due to their work schedules. A unique way her father was able to support the school during its formation was by producing the school song. This song is played and sung by all the members of the school each and every morning. Sara’s family will forever have a lasting impression and mark at the school.

**Education Professional Participant Stories**

**Kevin.** Kevin is a single thirty four year old African American male who has been in education for seven years. Kevin has taught multiple grades in the elementary setting including first, fourth, and fifth grades, but prefers the upper elementary grades over the younger ones. This is Kevin’s first year at the school used in this study and is the student the participant’s fifth grade science, math, and reading teacher. In the upcoming 2017-2018 school year, he will be teaching fifth and sixth grade science.

Kevin was born in Clanton, Alabama, where he received all his early years of education. During Kevin’s youth, his mother and father had a lasting impact on his education, “they always expected for my siblings and I to do our best”, Kevin reflects. Kevin’s mother finished high school but didn’t attend college and his father completed fifth grade. After dropping out of school, Kevin’s father worked on the farm to help his family. Kevin stated, “my parents may not have achieved much, but it motivated me and my siblings to do the best we could in school.” Kevin went to Marbury High School in Marbury, Alabama. After high school, Kevin went to The University of Alabama at Birmingham where he received an undergraduate degree in Theatre. Kevin was the first person in his family to complete college and earn bachelor’s degree. After college, Kevin worked with students through the YMCA organization in Alabama helping
students grow academically and socially for eight years. Due to Kevin’s high regard for education, Kevin received his Master’s degree in Education at the University of South Florida and Education Specialist degree in Curriculum Instruction in Management and Administration from Nova Southeastern University. Kevin believes “education is the key to a happy and successful life… Parents must first see and appreciate the value of education. It can be the difference between a happy or discontent life.”

Kevin entered education because “(he) just love(s) kids.” Kevin enjoys educating and seeing students achieve their goals. Kevin is the type of teacher the students can easily relate to and feel comfortable around. Kevin does a fantastic job of understanding his students and gaining their trust. Kevin believes that “you have to form a relationship with the student, so that they trust you, so they can learn from you.” After school you can usually find Kevin playing football with his students in the park adjacent to the school.

**Liz.** Liz is a fifty six old African American female. Liz has been married for thirty six years and has two sons and a daughter. During Liz’s twenty years in education, Liz has served in diverse communities and built relationships with a wide range of parents. During Liz’s time as a teacher, she has taught all content areas in fifth grade. In middle grades sixth, seventh and eighth, she has taught language arts, social studies, and science. She will be moving into a new educational role in the 2017-2018 as the upper grades curriculum coach at her current school.

Liz was born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland where she grew up in a low income area around the corner from John Hopkins Hospital. When Liz moved into junior high, her parents decided to move to Reistertown, Maryland in search for a better quality of schools. After a couple of years in Reistertown, Liz and her family moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin to finish up
her last year of junior high and complete high school at Harold S. Vincent High School where a 
large majority of the students were bused in from the surrounding inner city.

Liz’s mother and father had a lasting impact on her education. “My parents encouraged 
us to be thinkers and problem solvers… they always expected for my brother and I to do their 
best” Liz remembers. Liz’s mother was a teacher and her father a stationary engineer. Her 
parents believed strongly in extracurricular activities. “They kept us involved in extracurricular 
activities, such as piano lessons, dancing and singing… we traveled and participated in many 
cultural experiences” she smiles. My parents encouraged us to be thinkers and problem solvers. 
Liz mentioned that during her educational years, her mother, more than her father, played an 
important role in her academic success. “She provided much encouragement for continuing my 
education, she knows well about the struggles of maintaining educational goals while raising a 
family” Liz states.

After graduating high school, Liz worked for a year before attending Alverno College, an 
all-women’s catholic school, from which she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology 
and Social Science and a Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction and started a ten 
year career as a social worker. During Liz’s time in social work, she wanted a higher level of 
interaction with children and the desire to get into education formed. Liz moved to Atlanta, 
Georgia to start her career in education. Liz believes strongly in the importance of parental 
involvement,

“A parent’s involvement in their child’s academic education is extremely important to 
their success. I believe it is important for parents to lead by example.” A child must not 
only hear that education is important, they must also see that education is important. 
Parents must have discussions and participate in their child’s learning. Often parents feel 
uncomfortable when they are not fluent in a particular subject. They are afraid to show 
their weaknesses. A parent must be willing to learn and grow. A child will appreciate
their parent’s participation and desire to grow with them and being too busy for your student is an excuse, we all are busy, it is just a mindset.”

**Tyler, Curriculum Coach.** Tyler is a thirty-three-year-old single Caucasian male. Tyler grew up in a vibrant suburban town outside of a large southeast city. Tyler went through his education as a below average student, who always struggled with academics. Tyler became more focused on his education during his college years and found more success in post-secondary education. After graduating from the University of Georgia, Tyler went back to school to receive a Master in the Art of Teaching in Special Education from Valdosta State University. With a desire to learn within the area of education, Tyler continued his endeavors in education and completed a Specialist degree from Piedmont College in the area of Teaching and Learning. Currently, he is enrolled at Kennesaw State University as an Ed. D student in Teacher Leadership.

Tyler has nine years of educational experience. In this experience, Tyler has taught special and general education. As a special education teacher, Tyler spent three years as a self-contained teacher, serving students with a variety of disabilities, and two years as a co-teacher in kindergarten, second, and third grades. After educating special education students, Tyler transitioned to general education as a kindergarten teacher for two years. All of Tyler’s previous educational experience was spent at the same suburban public school outside of a major southeast city. Tyler’s current position as a curriculum coach, allows him to serve the students and teachers in a variety of ways. His main professional task is to provide research-based curriculum strategies to the teachers and provide support inside and outside the classroom. Tyler spends a lot of time in the classroom adding to instruction by coach teaching, observing and providing feedback, and assisting all students in small groups. Additional professional
responsibilities include lead testing coordinator for the entire school for state and local assessments. Along with the teachers, Tyler analyzes student data to better inform instruction in the classroom.
Chapter 5 - Participant Findings

In the following chapter an analysis of the interviews in relation to responsibility, motivation, relationships, and communication are outlined to show similarities and differences between the three students and two teachers. The analysis is supported by interview data from students, teachers, and observations form the curriculum coach.

To interpret the data collected through student and teacher interviews, I used a thematic analysis approach for this qualitative study. The thematic approach allowed me to analyze and focus in on the rich description of the unique, personal portrayals of each individual. To uncover the themes in the interviews, I coded each transcript line by line and pulled out common language and themes used by all participants. Through the process of coding, I developed initial themes of: communication, involvement, grades, relationships, parent support, student initiation, and types of support. After identifying these initial themes, I began the process of axial coding. Axial coding is the process of identifying categories and concepts that relate to one another.

During the process of axial coding, I used a graphic organizer web to organize the common themes and the unique characteristics of each student. After narrowing down the initial themes from seven to four, the four common themes of: responsibility, motivation, relationships with teachers and parents, and communication came in to focus. The four common themes were extrapolated from the information provided by all participants. The process of selecting the common themes for this qualitative study required an analysis of the common language and descriptions the students and teachers provided.

Responsibility: Two of the initial themes, student initiation and involvement, merged in to the theme of responsibility. Each student described their level of initiation and involvement in various activities throughout the day relating to the student’s level of responsibility. The
student’s academic awareness also played a key role in their level of responsibility and ability to provide details around the awareness of academic content and the classroom activities in which they participated in.

Motivation: Motivation was shaped by numerous factors from the student interviews. Students mentioned motivations in their education, extracurricular activities, and how their parents provided them with motivation in relation to succeeding in education.

Relationships: The interview protocol for each student enabled the student to provide insightful information pertaining to the relationships they have with parents and educators. Each student spoke to the interactions they have with their teachers and parents and how these interactions shaped their daily lives.

Communication: The students all referenced how parents communicated about grades. They also identified the level of attention through communication they received from their parents, whether it was a lack of communication or an abundant amount of communication centered on different topics.

Data from Participant Interviews

Responsibility

The definition and development of responsibility differed for each student and family in the study. Through these stories, the participants outlined their unique version of responsibility and gave an insight into their daily lives pertaining to the concept responsibility as well as the level of such they possess throughout their academic and extracurricular lives. During the interviews each student mapped out their responsibilities and navigated their day providing references to accountability and how their parents and teachers have guided them to be responsible students.
Jason. Responsibility is not an innate trait we are all born with, rather something learned through societal interactions. To teach responsibility, Jason’s parents have set up a daily structure full of opportunities for him to take responsibility, to ultimately teach the skill. Jason’s parents prioritize opportunities to learn responsibility in his life. They have set up a daily structure for him that allows for personal growth and responsibility. Jason described his day before, during, and after school. Much of his home life responsibility is placed on him and is evident in how he described the activities he takes on throughout his school week. When inquiring about his daily routine, Jason does not mention support from his mom or dad in his morning routine until preparing his breakfast, (sometimes he prepares his own breakfast) and providing a ride to school. Jason stated, “I get myself ready for the day and meet my mom downstairs for breakfast.” After Jason arrives to school, he partakes in a leadership role that his teacher has assigned him. Jason assists his teacher in the mornings by setting up materials for his classmates to access throughout the school day. Kevin, Jason’s 5th grade teacher stated, “I create opportunities for my students in the morning to assist me, it allows an opportunity to work together outside of instruction.” This activity exemplifies the connection and relationship Jason and his teachers share and the desire to help.

As we continued our discussion, Jason elaborated in detail about his academic day and what he is currently and has previously studied in class. Jason outlined his daily academic schedule and expectation during this time. Jason provided a detailed account of his school day, “we start our day with writing and then language arts. We have snack, math, and then specials. After specials we have lunch and then finish our day with social studies and math.” Jason went on to mention that he loves math, “I love math because I am good at it.” Jason’s awareness of his
academic day is a testament to his level of responsibility. Jason approaches school as an opportunity and responsibility.

Jason’s parents talk to him about the importance of an education and layout expectations. The importance of education to Jason and his parents is evident, Jason stated, “my parents tell me that if I get good grades I will get a good job and have opportunities.” Due to these expectations, Jason sees that it is his responsibility to do well in school and achieve academic success.

Self-discipline is a skill acquired and it has been promoted by Jason’s teachers and parents through routines, structure, and academic challenges. Jason’s parents and teacher have laid out expectations and given him the opportunity to take ownership and build necessary self-discipline skills. Through Jason’s explanations, evidence of his daily routine, and behaviors it is apparent he enjoys taking ownership of task and overall awareness of his day. Through my observations of Jason over the past two years at school, “he is a driven student who applies himself to his academics.” When I have assisted and personally lead instruction in the classroom, I have witnessed the discipline Jason embodies first hand. When Jason completes his classwork, “he is focused and enjoyed being challenged academically.”

**Ryan.** After completing the interview with Ryan, it became evident to me Ryan does not have a large amount of responsibility and personal ownership when it comes to his day. Much of his day is controlled by the adults in it, his parents and teachers. Ryan began our conversation by providing details about his routine, “my mom wakes me up in the morning because I am really, really tired in the morning.” After Ryan gets ready for school, his mother takes him, his brother and sister out for breakfast, “we got out to breakfast every morning before school.” Ryan stated his mom gets him to school at 7:55 AM, with the school day starting at 8:00 AM. Getting to
school right before the bell rings limits Ryan’s ability to participate in a leadership role before school begins.

When Ryan described his school day, he did not elaborate on his academics, he simply quickly mentioned the content areas.

“When we get to school we get on our computers and get on IXL. We switch classes and we have recess after that class. After recess we have math. We aren’t really doing anything in math right now. After math we have reading and we aren’t doing anything. After that we have specials which switches every day. We have a 10 min break between lunch and specials we go to the park to play. We have lunch after that and I get to talk with my friends. After lunch we go to social studies. After social studies we have science and after that it is the end of school.”

Ryan’s expression changed when it was time to talk about lunch. It was evident from Ryan’s tone and how he spoke about lunch, it is the highlight of his day. Ryan mentioned, “it is a chance to talk to my friends and we have free time.”

After school, “We pick up my sister and brother after school. We go home and I sometime have sports practice or I play with my friends.” In our conversation, Ryan had the opportunity to talk about his day and there was no mention of doing his homework after school. It was not until later in the interview when Ryan was prompted to talk about his homework did details emerge. Homework is not a focus in Ryan’s house for any of the children in the family. Rather, a healthy school-life balance is a priority in Ryan’s home life. Drawing from my participant-observer interview, I recalled in my interactions and conversations with Ryan’s mother (the school’s community council co-chair) at school, it was evident their approach is one of balance. To provide additional information around their whole life balance, I recalled a conversation with Ryan’s mom, “[they] (Ryan and his siblings) do not do homework every night, we have other activities, we do not focus on homework.” When asked about Ryan’s after school
activities, he did not elaborate on any home life responsibility or structures put in place for him. He mentioned a strong presence of sporting activities and that the family goes out to eat for dinner, “We go out to dinner and we watch television and then go to bed.” After interviewing and asking Ryan the questions associated with responsibility, it was evident Ryan does not currently have individual accountability and ownership through responsibility in his everyday life.

Sara. In starting her description of her daily routine, there was a limited response, “we listen to music on the way to school.” Sara mentioned nothing with regards to her life before getting in the car and heading to school. It was not until she was able to elaborate on her daily routine after school did she express a level of interest and responsibility. Sara expressed her interest in many enrichment activities and participates in a wide variety within the school community. She is an active student with a healthy after school agenda that keeps her involved at school and interacting with peers and mentors. “I am really busy. On Monday I go to dance, Tuesday is drumline, Wednesday is chorus, and Thursday I don’t do anything, and on Friday I have cheerleading.” Through observations of Sara’s involvement at school, “she participates in numerous activities that she loves and puts forth a lot of effort.” Sara was very elaborate when talking about her after school activities and her schedule. Sara mentioned “I do something every day after school besides Thursday.” Sara’s after school life includes, chorus, dance team, drumline, and cheerleading. Sara’s personality and eagerness to talk about her extracurricular life characterized this portion of the interview.

Sara demonstrates a high level of responsibility by taking control of her interest and getting involved in clubs and sports, “after school, I run a lot.” I have observed Sara’s eagerness, “she is focused and determined when she participates.” Sara took responsibility of her
enrichment and her parents encouraged her to do so as well. Extracurricular activities also help Sara’s parents since both parents work, “my mom is chief, food coordinator and my dad is a business man for a hair care company.” Sara enjoys her activities after school and does not mind staying after school, “I want to do these activities after school, and I like them.”

As much as Sara enjoyed talking about her after school life, it was the hours during her school day that she preferred not to talk about, “she rushed through this portion of the interview and did not elaborate.” Sara appeared disinterested in talking about her academics and her schedule of what she does during school hours,

“on a normal day we start off with English language arts and then after English language arts we do snack and track. Snack and track is when the students walk around the outdoor track located on the school property as they eat snack. After snack and track we have math, after math we have reading. After reading we go to specials and we do lunch after specials. Specials is the students’ enrichments, music, art, physical education, and Spanish. After lunch we have social studies and then we have science. After science it’s time for us to go home.”

Sara showed a profound preference and talent for social and enrichment activities in contrast to core academic pursuits. Through my observations of Sara over the past two years, “she is liked by all, peers and school personal. She is a very social student who can be seen enjoying her free time and talking with friends during lunch.”

**Conclusion on responsibility: similarities and differences.** The three students presented different levels of responsibility. Responsibility in this study refers to the amount of autonomy the student has throughout the day and the activities in which they participate. The responsibility that the students take on everyday was evident in their individual responses of daily activities and educational awareness. Jason’s story indicated he lives his life in a more controlled manner, while Ryan’s story was of a more relaxed lifestyle. Jason’s weekday routine
is very structured and he was clearly able to elaborate in detail all the individual activities in his
day such as: academics and the content material that is being covered, homework routine, piano
practice, family dinner, and reading every evening before. Ryan was less forthcoming with
information. Ryan quickly mentioned his school schedule and expressed that after school he
sometimes has sports practice or plays with friends and eventually will end his evening watching
TV. Sara and Jason both mentioned homework as the top priority once getting home from school
and their parents have made it one. Sara takes on a high level of responsibility when it comes to
her enrichment activities after school. Although she, like Ryan, limited her response when it
comes to school, she expressed a high level of interest and routine of her after school activities.
Sara and Jason both came across as having more responsibility in their life than Ryan. A strong
indicator of responsibility at the school level was indicated by the points and focus of the student
responses in relation to their involvement at school.

Responsibility can be interpreted by the level of engagement and interest demonstrated
by the students and how they narrated their school day by elaborating on the class schedule,
preferences, what they are currently studying, and activities they are involved in after school on
campus. Each student provided their academic school schedule and identified the classes they are
taking and in which order during the subject area is the focus of instruction. The difference in the
way they communicated about their school day and what they elaborated on or preferred to talk
about was evident. Jason went into detail about his school day, providing evidence of what he
was learning in each content area. Ryan and Sara simply listed the courses, no evidence of what
they were learning.
Motivation

As with the responsibility theme, these three students are all motivated by different factors in their lives that drive them to be involved. The participants provided answers to questions that provided insight into their internal motivation and the extrinsic motivation received from their parents. The students created a well-rounded perspective of their daily schedule, and from that, the following details emerged to form an impression of the motivations in their lives.

Jason. Jason is a motivated and driven student and his tenacity is evident when completing school work and caring about how he performs on assessments at school, his scores reflect his input. Observations of Jason completing benchmark assessments tell the story further. “He is frequently the last student in the room completing the assessment, not because he struggles, but rather because he is meticulous in proofreading and double-checking his work.” His motivation is demonstrated in his approach and eagerness to excel in his schoolwork. Jason described his homework and nightly routine involving academics, “when I get home from school I have a snack and work on my homework.” After Jason is finished his homework he practices, “I practice my piano after I do my homework.” This is an example of the structured environment Jason’s parents have established for him. In addition to making homework a priority, Jason also mentioned he reads every night. Jason stated, “After dinner, I read by myself from eight to nine and then it is lights out.” It is clear Jason desires to excel each day and put forth his personal best. After observing Jason interacting with peers, it is clear he is very mindful and thorough in his conversations with peers and school personnel. Furthermore, Jason is heavily motivated towards community and his passion for service is evident.
“We do food drives at school and we do baskets for local homeless shelters…we also collect donations. Jason was there every day for two weeks working a hot chocolate booth to raise money for these projects. He also was part of a project called destination imagination where he worked with peers to develop interactive skits on their own to perform in front of a panel of judges for the purpose of developing creativity and curiosity in the STEM (Science Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields, fine arts and service learning.”

These observations underscore Jason’s motivation to remain connected to scholastic endeavors in various arenas including academics, enrichment, and community service.

Jason elaborated on his motivation when he mentioned the conversation and daily communication he has with his parents relaying his parents communicate with him about his future and verbally support him through encouragement and self-realization. Through interviews and observations it was evident a strong foundation has been established by his parents and continued with the support of his teachers. Over the years at school, I have observed numerous interactions between Jason and school personnel, “Jason continues to look for ways to be involved at school and approaches leadership with ideas to support the school and its members.”

Jason continuously mentioned his parents offering support and future-oriented affirmations regarding his scholarly success saying “my parents talk to me about my education and doing well, they tell me that they want me to succeed in life… they tell me that, I am completing work that will matter in the end …I have purpose.” Furthermore, Jason mentioned that his parents discuss his future differently in contrast to his siblings. Jason mentioned that his brothers and sisters have jobs, but they have not met the aspirations of his parents. Observations of Jason and his family elucidate higher expectations of him. Jason is the youngest in the family, and I have found it is “Clear that his success is a priority and driven by both the aspirations of his parents and his derived intrinsic motivation.” Daily communication and affirmations have propelled
Jason to his current state of self-motivation and responsibility for his future. The high level of focus on Jason is evident in the way his parents communicate, nurture, and provide opportunities for him at school and outside of school.

**Ryan.** Like the other participants, Ryan expressed interest in school achievement. He identified his primarily motivation to do well in school is to make his parents happy. He mentioned the conversations with his parents “go well…because we do well in school…and they tell us (Ryan and his siblings) how great we are doing.” Ryan also communicated a strong value on balance in his life. In contrast to Jason who has a very structured home life with school taking priority on school days, Ryan has the freedom to enjoy his time after school without the pressures of constant academic achievement. As Ryan described his day after school it was evident he has the support of his family and a lot of time was spent at home or outdoors playing sports. Ryan said, “We pick up (my sister and brother) after school and I sometimes have sports practice or I play with my friends. We go out to dinner and we watch TV. Then I go to bed.”

Other times homework is a priority. I noted in my reflexivity interview that:

“We used to have a ‘no homework’ requirement when the charter was formed. Many parents preferred this policy including Ryan’s mother. Now that homework is beginning in by upper grade levels (Ryan’s group) his mother, who is also a Co-chair of the community council – the PTA Equivalent - expressed that when they get the weekly/monthly calendar, they may do all of the homework for the week in one night so they can have time for sports, family time, etc.”

Ryan also noted his parents assist with homework when needed saying “my dad usually helps me with math because my mom is usually busy.” Throughout the interview, Ryan communicated about a family that focuses on a whole life balance that incorporates school and extracurricular activities for a balanced life. After speaking with Ryan, I came away with an understanding that
the family’s focus was balance, not too much time was spent on just one thing, but more of an overall balance to build a well-rounded child. From my observations, “I wouldn’t say there was a lack of motivation on Ryan’s part or his parents when it comes to school, they just didn’t stress over it.” School is not a priority to Ryan, but as he stated, he is motivated by keeping his parents happy rather than intrinsic motivation to succeed.

**Sara.** Sara’s motivation shined through her responses when it came time for her to elaborate on her extracurricular activities. She expressed significant interest in these activities. Sara is an active member in the fifth grade community and is liked by many around the school. Sara is a very social and involved student who described the best part of her day as “hanging out with my friends.” I observed, “Sara is continually surrounded by her peers, she is liked by many at school.” When discussing academics, she gave very little detail into the instruction she receives on a daily basis. During this segment, she self-corrected herself multiple times in relation to the content areas she engages in and the order they appear in her day. Sara expressed during the interview that school is fun and she enjoys getting to see her friends, she has a great time with her friends at school and after school during her extra-curricular activities. An impression can be formed that Sara is motivated and enjoys the social elements of school and the nonacademic activities at school.

When Sara discussed parent motivation and interest level in her education, she stated her parents are driven by scholarship options. Her assertion that “they want me to get scholarships for high school and college” underscores a parental wish for the best education possible as such scholarship would provide opportunities at more prestigious institutions of learning. Sara’s teacher, Kevin, concurred by suggesting “I think one reason why parents are involved is because...
they want to see their child to continue their education after high school, they want to ensure they are getting good grades and learning what they are supposed to be learning.”

**Conclusion on motivation: similarities and differences.** With regards to motivation, recognition is a big factor that both teachers, Liz and Kevin, mentioned as a primary driving force to involve parents into education, Kevin mentioned, “Definitely something that recognizes their child will motivate parents. Most parents will come if their child is receiving something.” The other fifth grade teacher, Liz stated, “If it’s an athletic activity they are most likely to show up.” Athletics offer additional opportunities for students to excel and receive recognition. A recurring element in the motivation theme was that good grades in school or excellence on the ball field were particularly motivating when recognized by parents or teachers. Each participant mentioned the importance of good grades and the support and communication from their parents.

Motivation for these students came from both internal and external sources. Internal motivation for participants were noted when discussing activities they enjoyed. Jason genuinely enjoyed school, while Sara preferred extra-curricular activities, and Ryan preferred sports and time with family and friends. External motivation had several sources for the participants as well. Collectively, the participants mentioned recognition of their achievements was a primary factor in their motivation. For instance, each participant has the desire to do well in school and please their parents by doing well on test and getting good grades. For the fifth grade students in this study, having balance and a mix of both internal and external motivation presents an interesting opportunity for examination. These participants were motivated by numerous factors in their life to succeed. Through our conversations, motivations was a central theme for all participants, but it manifested in very different ways. Jason was interested in succeeding in school because he likes the challenge of academics. Sara, on the other hand, was motivated by social and creative
elements of her life, whereas core academic pursuits are motivated by a desire to satisfy her parents and attain scholarships. Lastly, Ryan received his motivation to do well in school from his parents and their desire for him to succeed. Ultimately, Ryan’s desire to impress his parents is the primary motivator of his academic endeavors.

**Relationships**

All three students have different relationships with their parents and teachers and the following are their stories surrounding these relationships. The student participant’s perspectives will provide a detailed look into how the relationships with their teachers and parents shape their education, social and emotional well-being, and various other aspects of their lives.

**Relationships with Teachers.** The high level of individual relationships with their teachers was apparent in all the students’ interviews. The teachers also expressed this sentiment.

**Jason.** As the other two student participants previously stated in this study, Jason, has a high level of support and strong relationships with his teachers. Jason mentioned there is a bond with his teacher that is evident in the classroom and outside of school, “my teachers care about me because they are nice and come to my sporting events.” Jason feels that he has broken the barrier that allows for freedom in the relationship with his teachers. Throughout the school day, Jason is able to help his teacher and be a leader in the classroom by helping his teacher prepare for the day when preparing the classroom. Jason mentioned, “I help my teacher set up for the day, I unstack the chairs and pass out papers.” This time working together is critical for both parties involved. The student sees their teacher as someone who is invested and cares for their well-being which pays dividends in the future. In addition to eating lunch together, I have observed Jason, his peers, and teacher playing football, baseball, and soccer during the lunch
break and after school. Outside of school, Jason mentioned his teachers attend his sporting events. This effort by the teacher has an enormous impression on the parents and student. I have had parents personally mention their appreciation for the effort the teachers put forth to attend outside school activities. During this time, Jason perked up when talking about his teacher and took pride in the fact that his teacher cares enough for him and his classmates that he would show up to his football games. Going the extra mile for students means a tremendous amount to the parents and student.

**Ryan.** Ryan has a strong school and family support structure. I have observed this over the years, “Ryan’s parents can be seen interacting with his teachers in a friendly manner along with additional school personnel.” Ryan has established relationships with his teachers. Ryan mentioned his teachers care about him as a student, “they (teachers) are funny and do awesome things.” I have observed Ryan’s teachers going above and beyond for Ryan, “they show interest in his well-being and overall maturity,” and they support Ryan outside of school. Ryan mentioned, I play football with my teacher during lunch and after school.” I have seen Ryan, his peers, and teacher talking about football, especially Auburn football. They share a common love for both of these things. In addition to being able to share stories and laugh together, Ryan’s teachers attend his sporting events outside of school.

An event that left a big impression and was a turning point in Ryan’s relationship with his teacher was when all the boys in the fifth grade went to a pro basketball game with their male teachers this past winter. At the end of the school year, the fifth grade boys and their teacher were able to cap off a great year by golfing at Top Golf and bonding as a male unit. Ryan’s body language and expression really showed through with excitement when he was describing these
interactions with his classmates and teachers. A bond and strong relationship were definitely formed due to these outings.

**Sara.** Like Ryan, Sara mentioned the unique relationship she has with her teachers and their willingness to go above and beyond for her, Sara went on to describe her relationship with her teachers as a, “love relationship”. Much like her eagerness to talk about her life after school, Sara beamed when talking about her teachers. Sara has a strong relationship with her teachers, “because they treat us all the same.” This past fall, Sara and her classmates participated in a ladies only day. During this day, which took a lot of preparation and extra time on the part of her teachers, Sara participated in activities and conversations that positively impact her as a maturing lady. As the curriculum coach of the school, it is part of the school’s mission and vision to create real world awareness for their students by incorporating life lessons into their academics. Sara has a high level of involvement from adult figures at school. Sara interacts with her teachers, school personnel, after school enrichment coordinators, and college students from a local university that come to mentor Sara and her peers during after school hours.

**Conclusion on relationships with teachers: similarities and differences.** All three students spoke highly of their teachers and the relationships they have with them. Ryan and Jason mentioned their teacher comes to sporting events to support them. Liz stated, “If they have outside activities, if they are in dance or football and the parents contact me, I try to go to those activities and participate in those celebrations for the kids.” Even the teacher recognizes the importance and value in attending the students’ events. All three students not only have strong interactions with their teachers, but also supporting school personnel. Speaking from personal experience, “Jason, Sara, and Ryan are easy to talk to, you can carry on a conversation with all three students.”
**Relationships with Parents.** The student participants expressed varying degrees of relationships with their parents and how they interacted and levels of parental involvement provided by their parents.

**Jason.** In Jason’s Life, his parents are active participants, not only in his academics but social well-being. Jason mentioned the numerous conversations and input they provide that is not over-barring to Jason, but just right, “really, I like how my parents are, they do not push me too hard.”

Jason’s parents are laying out a structure for him, but not controlling that structure, “I like how they do not spend too much time with me, they also do not spend too little of time.” Jason said his parents help him with his school work at home. On several occasions Jason mentioned the interactions he has with his parents through the entirety of his day, “I meet my mom downstairs for breakfast…at 7:00 PM we have dinner as a family.” The overall impression that Jason conveyed was the interest level and how attune his parents are with his life, “they help me do stuff that will benefit my future and keep me on track.” Due to this level of interest and awareness, Jason and his parents have a supportive and strong relationship.

In talking with Jason and through his responses, it is evident Jason’s parents have established a daily routine for him to maximize his potential. Jason continuously eluded to conversations he has with his parents about school and how he is personally doing, the family bonding at dinner, and words of encouragement he mentioned throughout the interview. In reference to these activities, Jason stated, “my parents tell me I have purpose.” The support from his parents is not one-sided, but rather shared mutually by both mom and dad, “both of my parents help me with my homework” Jason said. The support from his parents can be seen at school and home. Jason mentioned his parents attend school functions, meeting with his teachers,
and volunteer at school events. Each day, one of Jason’s parents drops him off and picks him up at school. During the time they spend together in the car to and from school, Jason mentioned, “we talk about what I will be doing at school that day.” The quality time Jason and his parents spend together is uninterrupted by technology, Jason mentioned, “they help me whenever I need help…they usually help me for fifteen to thirty minutes.”

Additionally, Jason’s parents are active school community members. They attend school functions, parent teacher conferences, and communicate on a regular basis. I have personally observed the consistent interaction and involvement that Jason’s parents have at the school. In addition to supporting Jason, they support other students at the school, Jason mentioned “My mom always sends stuff in if there is anything that my teacher needs. She feels like it is her responsibility because some kids might not be able to bring a snack so she would like to give those snacks and something to eat during the day.”

In addition to snacks “Jason’s mom also takes his classmates to sport practice and games.” Jason’s parents demonstrate and model citizenship that is having a lasting impression on Jason as noted by Jason being seen volunteering and giving back to his community throughout the school year.

Ryan. Ryan’s parents are involved at school. Due to my position at the school, I know Ryan’s parents give of their time and monetary support to the school. Ryan’s mom is the Co-Chair of the community council. Ryan mentioned that “I wish my mom was less involved in student council because she has a lot of meetings and it takes up a lot of time.” However, Ryan recognizes their involvement, “My parents are involved because they care a lot about my grades.” Ryan’s parents are invested in him and his education, “They care about what I am doing at school.” When it comes to Ryan’s homework they spend very little time on it, “they
spend about 5 minutes with me.” It is evident they care about Ryan’s academic success, “my parents care because they help me if I need help or if I’m feeling frustrated.”

In addition to mentioning the level in which his parents care about him, Ryan did state that it is, “my teachers mainly,” helping him with his schoolwork. I asked Ryan if his parents help him one-on-one or if they are multitasking while helping, “Most of the time they are multitasking when they are helping me, my dad helps me.” It is evident Ryan’s parents care, “Any papers that we get they check over it to see if there is anything wrong” yet, homework is simply not a priority for Ryan and his siblings. In my conversations with Ryan’s mom at school she has expressed her personal thoughts on homework and the place it has in their life. Ryan’s family believes in balance, “we do not do homework every night, we do other activities.”

Previously mentioned in a prior section, Ryan and his classmates attended numerous events with their teachers throughout the school year and this was made possible by Ryan’s parents. Ryan’s parents have provided all the funding for these trips so that Ryan can bond with his classmates and teachers. Ryan’s parents support, invest, and care for the well-being of their son in numerous ways.

Sara. After speaking of the relationship Sara has with her teachers, I also discussed her relationship with her parents and their involvement in her school life. I asked Sara if her parents are active at school, she simply and clearly responded with, “no.” Sara’s parents are not regular active members at school and Sara stated, “I wish they would be more involved.” Sara referenced her parents’ participation, “I wish they would come to school performances and stuff.” Her parents do not regularly come to extra-curricular activities; but, do make it a priority to come to academic-based meetings, “they only come to my conferences about report cards” Sara noted.
Liz, Sara’s fifth grade teacher, has seen this absenteeism at school functions from many parents, the reason being work commitments she believes,

“Probably work schedule, I would say it is the one obstacle that would prevent them from being involved. It is the time frame for when we get out of school and they can’t be here at the end of the day is a major obstacle. I have a handful of parents who may not be available around the dinner time frame but most of my parents are off of work by 5:30, so a majority of them are available for late night activities.”

Sara mentioned there is nothing that gets in the way of her parents participating at school.

When it comes to her homework, Sara mentioned that her parents take that very seriously, “they make me do it first when I get home.” Sara stated her parents are always willing to help her and give their full attention when helping her, “they check my homework…they keep checking it. My parents help me with my homework at home, they help me when I ask… they tell me if something is wrong and make me fix it.” Sara has the support of her parents when it comes to her academics. Liz see a higher percentage of support with student assignments when she contacts the parents,

“A lot of them are involved when I contact them about assignments that the students need to do. If the students is below level in certain aspects I will contact them to let them know and the parents will do what they can improve that level of academics.”

When I asked what type of attention she gets from her parents and if they are doing multiple things at the same time, Sara said “no, it is one on one.” From her statement, it is evident her parents are not distracted by their cell phone, work, or any other obligation; but, they are there to support her and make sure she completes her homework.
Conclusion on relationships with parents: similarities and differences. What can be said for all these parents and students, is their parents care for their well-being. These parents are putting their child’s education first. The school that these students attend uses a lottery system to accept enrollment. To get your student in the school, the parents must apply, the student is not automatically enrolled. The schools in the area are some of the lowest performing in the school district and State and the parents wanted more for their student’s education, which is why the parents chose the charter school. The parents took the initiative to provide a better education for their student.

Differences amongst the students is the overall level of involvement when it comes to the student’s education. All the parents have supported their students in unique ways. Sara’s parents having her involved in extracurricular activities, Ryan’s parents prefer and make sure that Ryan has a balanced life, and Jason’s parents have set up a routine and structure that promotes individual ownership and maturity. All the parents assist their students with their homework, but the level of support varies.

To build a strong relationship with students, parents will need to invest, spend time, and communicate with their student. Referring to parental involvement, Kevin states,

“I would say 80% of the parents are involved. They help with homework, school functions, volunteering. The 80% are pretty much involved. Outside of school, parents will attend events and different activities. It could be more than just one thing that keeps parents from getting involved, work, sick kids, additional kids that go to different schools. Some parents have to go to events for their other children.”

Kevin is not blind to the obstacles parents face, he familiar of them and because of this, he does the best to provide that additional support. Liz shared her perspective on parental involvement,
“Probably work schedule, I would say it is the one obstacle that would prevent them from being involved. It is the time frame for when we get out of school and they can’t be here at the end of the day is a major obstacle. I have a handful of parents who may not be available around the dinner time frame but most of my parents are off of work by 530, so a majority of them are available for late night activities. They are not always at functions, if it an athletic function they are for sure going to show up. If it is general function, like a writing lesson they will probably not show up.”

She notes parents are more likely to provide support and interaction with their student when it involves athletics versus academics.

**Communication**

In the following student perspectives, the students provide insight into how they communicate with their parents, typical conversation topics, and how this is viewed by their teachers.

**Jason.** Jason discussed talking to his parents on the way to school, from school, when he gets home from school, and at the dinner table. Communication between family members is protected and valued and that is evident because they hold time together sacred by making it a point to communicate and interact. Technology is not present when Jason is communicating with his mom and dad. When both parental parties are involved in homework, the time is uninterrupted with other responsibilities his mom and dad might have and the free from the distraction of technology. Jason mentioned “my parents are not doing other things when they help me.” Jason mentioned his dad and mom will stop what they are doing to give him their full, undivided attention when assisting with homework.

In addition to everyday conversation about academics, Jason expressed that every time he gets a report his parent’s ask him, “how did I do,” and “they look at the teachers notes.” His parents also talk to him about his testing taking, “they ask me how I did and was it easy for me.”
Jason’s parents balance their conversation with talking about academics more frequently than when he just receives a report card or has a test. Throughout the interview Jordan mentioned all the opportunities that he has to communicate with his parents and this biggest variable that stood out was the absence of technology and the balance of communication.

**Ryan.** When talking through the communication questions about his day and education, Ryan explained his parents only talk or bring up school when grades are involved. Ryan mentioned, “we really only talk about school when I get my report card.” He stated this was among all of his siblings in relation to his parents placing importance on grades. There is never daily communication that goes beyond basic inquiry about the day in relation to school. When communicating, Ryan stated that technology is a factor and that we are usually on our devices in the car ride home from school. There is never uninterrupted attention when communicating as a family, there is always a type of device involved, whether it be an iPhone, tablet, or a different type of electronic. The family’s communication is never pure dialogue between both parties. Ryan went on to say that there are times when there is one-on-one communication and that it is usually during homework help.

**Sara.** Sara spoke highly of her parents’ support of her homework and giving her their full attention; but, homework seems to be the only time her parents give her their undivided attention. Sara stated that she and her parents talk about school when it is centered on grades and her report cards. Her parents show concern for her academic performance, but do not demonstrate it on a daily basis.

A time when Sara has an opportunity to interact and communicate with her parents is on the car ride to and from school. Sara mentioned they listen to music in the morning on the car ride to school, “we usually sing together,” Sara said. Her parents bond with Sara during the car
ride to school by singing music that they both like, but it is a missed opportunity to talk about the day. Sara’s parents pick her up from school each day, usually her mom, because dad travels for work. She mentioned that there is usually no conversation between her mom and her in car. On the car ride home, which is very short, Sara mentioned her mom is always on her cell phone talking to someone else. Sara mentioned that she just plays on her phone in the car after school.

When it comes to Sara’s parents’ interaction and communication with school, Sara stated that her parents only communicate with her teacher when they are required to come in for the parent teacher conference. The school has two mandatory student conferences a year with the option to request two additional conferences. This type of communication is on trend with the frequency that Sara and her parents communicate, this communication is present when grades are the topic.

**Conclusion on communication: similarities and differences.** Sara and Ryan described very similar situations when it comes to communication with their parents and the presence of technology. Technology is a barrier in both of these families and gets in the way of face to face communication with one another. Liz stated, “I almost want to say that parental involvement has gotten worse because of the technology. Previously, you were having a five minute conversation in the car but now you aren’t having a conversation at all because everyone is on their device.” Technology is getting in the way of parent fully understanding what is happening in the classroom and is a barrier to parental involvement. Liz mentioned during our interview that, “Parents should have a basic conversation, I don’t care that you don’t have a college degree or that you are busy, you should still have a conversation with your child on what they are learning.” It is evident to Liz that conversations are not occurring frequently enough, “When I talk with the parents about the curriculum/academics when there is no progress report the parents
seem spacey and aren’t able to talk about the curriculum and this lets me know that the communication is not there.” If parent are communicating with their students they would know more about the curriculum and what they are learning. Liz went on to say,

“I think we have a handful of parents that think that they are not the specialist and the teachers are the specialist, and they allow the teachers to do everything. Parents feel like they aren’t the expert and so they stay away from education. Sometimes they aren’t involved because they have not made it a priority to be involved.”

Parents need to make it a priority to have a conversation with their student about what is happening at school, parent involvement needs to take precedence over technology. The same went for Kevin, it wasn’t the technology that gets in the way for Kevin, but a lack of knowledge of the parents part, “Knowledge base hinders parents, and some parents just don’t know what is going on in school. Parents just don’t understand the homework. Basically, they don’t have the willingness or determination to see that their child’s education is first”

Jason descried a very different type of communication than Sara and Ryan. Jason described one that his not overran by technology, but one that is intentional and frequent. Jason described his family as having numerous opportunities to have discussions throughout the day. Kevin stated, “That it is very important. It’s simple, parents need to take the time out and have a conversation with their child about school, how their day was, and just how their social life is with peers. The interaction with parents play a very important role in the development of the child. There are some parents who do not know what is going on with their student’s school life, outside of their home life, some could care less about what their kid is up to.” Kevin made a valuable stamen and observation, parents need to care, they need to make their students a priority, Kevin is experiencing this first hand in the classroom every day. Jason’s parents do care and show in the uninterrupted conversations and the absence of technology when they are
communicating. They are “present and active” parents who show up to events that reassure Jason that they support him.

All three students stated that there person center their conversations around grades and report cards and the teachers are aware of that too, Liz mentioned, “A simple conversation would have parents involved. I don’t think parents become involved until it is time to look at a report card, or if it’s time to look at their progress.” Liz feel that this is too little and too late, parents need to be active from the start. Liz continued with additional thoughts around communication and its relationship with parental involvement,

“I would add to that the parent involvement piece, the lack of parental involvement drives me crazy. It drives me crazy because if parents were more involved than kids would learn more. People say that parents have to work or parents’ schedules keep them from being involved in their students’ education and that bothers me. I don’t know if it’s something that you require people to do, I feel like it should be a requirement for a certain amount of hours to interact with your student in relation to school, to have a conversation and to look at your child’s school work.”

Liz continued her perspective on parental involvement as being a requirement in schools,

“There needs to be some way to require parent involvement, I don’t want to hear the excuses. You can have a conversation with your child about what they are doing, have a conversation about lessons from class, so you are able to help them. You don’t have to be the greatest at math to help your student in math or to have a simple conversation. A simple conversation could be, “what did you learn today, “what did you do in math today.””

Engagement is essential to communicating with your student Liz stated,

“Just be engaged. The conversation that you have with your student will help your student process and they might express that they fully don’t understand what was taught in math today. It is the conversation piece that would help with the parents being involved. That is something that drives me crazy. I would make it some sort of requirement.”
To Liz, communication is key and has the power to alter a student’s education. “All the parents are communicating with their students, but is it necessarily enough and targeted to maximize the benefit.”

**Conclusion**

In this chapter the student and teacher participants (plus additional observational data provided by the curriculum coach) were able to provide individual perspectives on education and how their interactions with parents, peers, and teachers play a key role in their educational day and leading to individual student success. To get to this point in our analysis it all started with interviews of three fifth grade students form a school in a large southeastern city. Each student has the same teacher and very similar socioeconomic states, peer interactions, and support from school personnel. How the students differs are in their levels of academic ability, levels of responsibility, motivation, relationships with their parents, and communication with their parents. Each one of these themes plays a critical role in the day to day life of the student and how they individual approach situations in their life.

Through the analysis of the narratives provided by the student and teacher participants, it became evident that each participant had in impact on one another and that parents play a key role in the level of success of the student. In the narratives, each participant expressed their individual perspectives in regards to responsibility, motivation, relationships, and communication and the factors that play a key role. Each student sees a varying level of success and has a varying level of support from their parents, but one constants for all the students was the steady level of support from their teachers, in and outside of school. In regards to the analysis and the data presented through the interviews, a conclusion can be made that students benefit from parental involvement. Parental involvement will always come in different amounts for each
students, due to diversity in family structures and their abilities, but what became evident
through the analysis is; there must be some amount, some degree of parental involvement in the
student’s life. Parental involvement has the ability to alter a student’s trajectory and lead them to
success.
Chapter 6- Conclusion and Further Research Suggestions

Why Individual Stories of Parental Involvement and School-Home Relationships Matter

Personal accounts and stories are genuine insights to what is truly occurring in education on a daily basis. The personal narratives from all participants provided detailed information and are lived experiences that are invaluable to the evolution and promotion of parental involvement and its ability to effect student success. Through this analysis, it is evident that relationships between the school and families are critical to student success. Schools and teachers have a responsibility to support the parent so the parent can, in return, support their student. The accounts and information concluded from this study are important because students matter, their future matters, and if this data provides any level of insight, encouragement, or action to promoting student success, than this study succeeded. The following information outlines and provides support for the value and worth provided in the narratives to the future success and research of parental involvement.

Stories of Responsibility

The theme of responsibility emerged out of the students’ awareness and participation in activities throughout their day. During the interviews, the students spoke to their level of responsibility. Unbeknownst to the students, they eluded to forms of responsibility during the interview by answering questions prompting them to describe their day from morning to night. In these descriptions, the students describe the educational day and activities they participated in after school. Much of the students’ responsibility is established through the family structure facilitated by the adult(s) in their life and was evident through the students’ descriptions.
Responsibility was the most varied theme and topic among all the students. The students described very different days and how they navigated their school day and home life. When describing their school day, Jason, Ryan, and Sara all had different interpretations and the varying levels of acknowledgment pertaining to their educational responsibilities. Jason was very aware of his academics and what he is studying in each subject. When communicating about his school day, he did not simply list the contents in order like Ryan and Sara, but provided insight into what specific topic he and his classmates are learning about in each content area. Ryan and Sara merely listed what content subjects that they are currently in this semester, no explanation or insight into what specific topics they are discussing.

The difference between the students is ownership and responsibility for their education. Students need to take an active role in their education. Student responsibility and ownership of their education is reflected when the student is personally active in their role as a learner. Once the student engages and becomes actively responsible for their education, the possibility for student success grows. A school’s main purpose is to grow that student, not only academically but socially as well, students must become responsible for their involvement in education. Students can take on responsibility by making choices and taking actions within their education that will lead to success and meeting their educational goals. Just as the school has a responsibility, parents have the same task to provide opportunities for their student to take on responsibility. Parents cannot control every aspect of their student’s life; however, they can guide and provide direction in a way that is not overbearing to the point the student cannot be a leader in their own development.

In analyzing the student narratives and responsibility in education, Jason described a much higher level of responsibility than Ryan and Sara. It can be interpreted that much of
Jason’s success is matched with his level of investment in his academic day. Jason’s accomplishments in education match the level in which he is familiar with what he is studying in class. To enhance student accomplishments, it is important to encourage students to take ownership and accountability for their education (Bailey & Guskey, 2011). As previously stated, my observations as a curriculum coach at the school can support the level in which these three student participants are responsible for their academics. The three students have demonstrated varying levels of interest and ownership in academics and it is evident in the manner in which they speak of it and the individual levels of success exhibited in the classroom.

**Summary.** The three students demonstrated varying degrees of responsibility in their interviews. All the students mentioned the content subject areas they are presently in; but, only one of the student was able to provide detailed insight into the content area. This level of interest and expression is correlated to the academic and personal success the individual demonstrates in the classroom. Educational professionals and parents must find a way to raise the level of personal responsibility for students. Students need a level of ownership and responsibility in their education. By taking on responsibility, the student becomes an advocate in their education, develops a higher level of participation, engages in discussions, and avoids excuses in relation to their education.

**Stories of Motivation**

The theme of motivation emerged as one of the four major themes due to the student responses in relation to involvement in activities, their overall interest level, and the type of support from their parents. The overall theme of motivation was shaped by the individual factors each student communicated during the student interview session. Students mentioned
motivations in their education, extracurricular activities, and how their parents provided them with motivation in relation to succeeding in education. All three students were driven and motivated by different factors and they communicated those differences by elaborating in a manner that leads you to believe there is a high level of interest in particular activities and support from their parents.

All three student participants spoke to the support from their parents that help to motivate them to succeed in their education. They spoke to the degree in which their parents help them with their homework and that their overall motivation for succeeding in education is driven by their parents’ desire for them to succeed. The parents of each student created images of success and have communicated those expectations to their children for varies reasons.

Variety became the underlining theme of motivation after analyzing Jason and Sara’s interviews. Both participants spoke to a high degree of variety and diversity in the activities in which they enjoy participating. Each one of these individuals is motivated by success and pure enjoyment of participating in numerous activities throughout their day. Jason mentioned his daily routine and all the activities he participates in from playing the piano, nightly reading, and academic perseverance have led to his overall level of motivation and desire to succeed. Sara mentioned the numerous activities she participates in after school and how she is highly motivated by them to perform her personal best. From the personal accounts provided in this study, I feel that the variety of activities Jason and Sara participate in is associated with their high level of motivation. The activities they partake in provide challenges for them to work through and stay motivated in to succeed.

What we can learn from this is that there is value in parents motivating their child to succeed. It is important to communicate this expectation of educational excellence. Students
need a healthy level of motivation; motivation that comes from the parent (external) and from within (internal). All the students mentioned their parents provide motivation for academic success and communicate the value in succeeding in education. Jason’s parents motivate him by communicating the need to succeed for a better future. Ryan’s parents provided motivation to receive good grades and Sara’s parents motivate her to succeed to hopefully one day receive an educational scholarship. Motivation is a trait that must be modeled, taught, and communicated. It is rare a student so young embodies a high level of motivation, but this trait can be acquired. Motivation is left up to the parent and teacher to teach and guide a student to understand motivation and apply it in their everyday life.

Joyce Epstein’s Overlapping Spheres of Influence speaks to the importance of communication. Communication from the parent can help motivate the student to succeed. Communication is one of the six types of parental involvement she suggests has the ability to bridge the gap between family, school, and community leading to a successful partnership and ultimately benefiting the student. Communicative involvement includes the parents’ ability to be informed, know what is happening in the school, and regularly interact with the school. When the parent is informed, they are better able to motivate and provide support for their student. All of these factors can ultimately lead to a higher degree of motivation and student success.

In chapter five, Jason mentioned his parents provide support for his success by talking about his future, communicating that he has purpose, and motivating him to succeed. Jason’s parents are active members within the community and school. They attend events put on by the school to better stay informed. This information they receive enables them to effectively communicate, provide structure, and motivate Jason in his success. Ryan’s mother is also an active member of the school community and his aware of school activities involving her son and
the other students. This information allows her to motivate a desire for success and how Ryan can achieve that level of success. Ryan’s parents motivate and advance his success by placing importance around getting good grades. For Sara, her parents communicate the need for good grades so that she will receive a scholarship that will support her future educational endeavors.

**Summary.** Motivation for students can come from many different support structures in their life. Motivation is evident in their parent’s communication of the need to succeed in education for current and future endeavors in education and eventual professional endeavors. In addition to support from external factors, students must be taught the importance of motivation and build a strong work ethic that parallels the traits it takes to recognizing times to stay motivated and maintain a level of stamina. Beneficial factors of motivation have the ability to develop a goal-oriented, driven student. As a society, we place importance on goal setting and find value in this trait. It is important we teach our young students the value in motivation and the benefits it has on their abilities to mature and succeed.

**Stories of Relationships**

Relationship as a theme developed through the stories of all the participants. Each participant spoke to the relationships they have with each other and the impact those relationships have as well as the value they add to their educational experience. Relationships in education have a tremendous impact on all parties involved, students and teachers both benefit. A study by Uslu & Gizir (2017) found “Both teacher–student relationships and the peer relationships play a significant role in the ability to predict a sense of school belonging for both genders.” As previously stated, the students all spoke to the individual relationships they have
with their teachers and how their teachers go above and beyond to have an impact in their lives; and the teachers illustrated what actions they take to create that relationship with the student.

After interviewing the students, it became evident they receive a high level of support from their teachers. Both male participants mentioned their teacher, Kevin, would attend their sporting events outside of school. This act by their teacher had a direct impact in strengthening their relationships. Sara mentioned the time her teacher, Liz, put together a special day for all the girls in the class and created an opportunity to learn more about being a lady. The teachers are investing in the student because they are maturing adolescents that will one day have an impact and add value to our society. The teachers recognize the impact the students have and they have provided opportunities for students to add value and give back to the community by providing opportunities to interact with the neighborhood senior citizen community, education support from the local food bank, and community service projects around Black History Month.

As previously stated in the above sections, all three students spoke highly of the interactions and relationships with their teachers. Kevin validated the students’ impressions by adding, “teaching is very fluid for me, but I don’t have all the answers…a perfect way to teach a child does not exist” but in my time with Kevin, it is evident that he is adding value to these students’ lives by interacting personally with these students in a professional manner. While mentoring a student, “You have an open mind and work alongside the child instead of forcing something on them, and building relationships with the students is important.” The teachers support all the students, regardless of academic ability, race, or economics and are personally influencing each student by supporting them at school and outside of school. After hearing the students’ stories, it became abundantly clear that they have positive relationships with their teachers, “Positive and supportive relationships with teachers and peers promote an adolescents’
sense of school belonging, which engender the will to participate cooperatively in classroom and school activities” (Uslu & Gizir 2017).

Regardless of student academic ability, race, gender, and other differentiating characteristics, the teachers are building professional relationships with the students in the classroom and outside of school. Jason feels he has a strong relationship with his teacher because, “they can joke around together that they have broken down a barrier and able to communicate freely” and that has resulted in a strong, supportive relationship between he and his teacher. Ryan attributes the student teacher relationship to his teacher’s willingness to attend and support him outside of school at his football games. Sara expressed her recognition of a relationship between her and her teachers because, “they do nice things for her.” Each student had a different example of why they have a strong relationship with their teachers, but the presence of a strong, positive relationship between the student and teacher has had an impact on the student.

Teachers have a unique chance to invest in each student and embrace this impactful opportunity due to the eight or more hours they spend with each student daily. However, this does not mean the teachers are not feeling pressure, teachers are doing more than just teaching academic standards, but personify much more to the student. Kevin feels the pressure society places on him because he is a teacher, “I just feel like so much pressure is on teachers to really be everything for a child” but being ‘everything’ for that child has really paid dividends for these three students.

Teachers connect with students personally by investing their emotions, time, and effort into their students. When teachers are personally investing in students, teachers must focus on the individual student’ strengths, weaknesses, and needs in order to help them feel a part of the
bigger school community (Rawatla & Petersen, 2012). During the academic day, teachers are finding unique and student-friendly ways to interact and build relationships with students. Ryan and Jason mentioned the times their teacher plays football with them during lunch or after school. In addition to the leadership opportunities their teacher affords them, and in return, this allows the student to support their teacher and continue the personal connection with them. Sara mentioned the opportunities her teacher creates to make them a well-rounded individuals by offering advice on womanhood and involving them with the local women’s senior citizens. The personal connections these teachers are making with their students are creating a positive culture and strength within each student. The teachers are making school a place of comfort, safety, and freedom that will allow the student to prosper academically and socially. Kevin feels that if parents cannot provide the comfort and support students need, then it is up to the education industry to do that,

“If parents aren’t doing what they are supposed to be doing, there needs to be a program that assist the child and family to get them where they are going. They have programs like that now, but not well funded, schools suffer from not having all those types of resources.”

Liz describes her interactions and viewpoints on working with her students and how she has grown in this endeavor,

“Small steps are better than no steps at all. When I started teaching I just wanted everything, I was going to save the world overnight. I’ve learned now that little things can sort of make the differences.”

Liz enjoys the journey with her students from the beginning of the school year and until the end, and tries to instill a love of writing, a true passion for Liz,

“So you may not have a child that loves writing but at the end of the school year the kid will write, kids don’t have to always love everything. I always wanted my students to feel the same passion that I felt towards a subject.”
This is a testament to her strong ambition to personally connect with her students on an academic level and share a mutual love of writing.

The educational lives of studies are multi-layered experiences that include a complex system of academics and relationships. “There are many different domains involved in school, including classroom social and learning dynamics. In the school community, classrooms are seen as social contexts in which various interactions occur amongst adolescents” (Uslu, F., & Gizir, S., 2017). As an educator, I know firsthand our goal is to provide a diverse education while instilling a sense of community where students grow and feel a sense of security and comfort.

The way a student feels at school, directly impacts their learning, engagement, and motivation (Corso, Bundick, Quaglia, & Haywood, 2013; Wentzel, 1999).

There are numerous opportunities for teachers and students to build relationships and it largely relies upon the teacher to find those opportunities and capitalize on them. When teachers genuinely reach out to students, while maintaining respect and interest, students will respond and will feel a strong sense of belonging at school, motivation, and respectful behavior from students (Giani & O’Guin, 2010; Ma, 2003). It is to each parties’ benefit that the teacher and students build a strong relationship because they both ultimately and mutually benefit from the interaction. The teacher sees the student as more than just a number in their classroom, in addition to learning what motivates the individual student and their passion that will bridge any gaps in the classroom. The teacher can use the passions and motivations to help the student succeed and grow in their leadership abilities. From the student’s perspective, the student sees their teacher as more than just the leader in their classroom; but, someone who cares for them and goes above and beyond for them. When students recognize the efforts their teacher puts into
instruction and fostering social and emotional growth, the student will hopefully meet that effort with extra effort on their end.

Each student spoke about the personal connection they have with their teacher. When speaking of their teacher, it was made abundantly clear the teachers have had an impact on the students’ lives in a short amount of time; less than eight months of school, only 160 school days. The connections that are formed between the student and teacher fosters changes in students to form a sense of comfort at school, academic motivations, goal and value setting, and overall performance levels (Giani & O’Guin, 2010).

**Summary.** A strong relationship between a student and teacher can make a large difference in the life of the student. It is currently making the difference for the three individuals I interviewed. It is evident through their testimony, their teachers are going above and beyond to ensure they know their teachers are invested in their education and maturity. Teachers and student both mutually benefit from this relationship. Both parties see the person is much more than just a student in the classroom or the figurehead of the classroom, but people with interest, passions, and aspirations for more; “the most frequently stated indicator of highly effective schools for students is a caring environment exhibiting a homelike atmosphere in which teachers treat all students with respect and care, and interact with them in relationships similar to the extended family” Uslu, F., & Gizir, S. (2017).” (Tosolt, 2010).

**Stories of Communication**

Communication as a theme emerged due to the students all mentioning that their conversations around education primarily occur when grades are recorded or when the student receives a report card. Conversations about grades, plus the lack of any additional conversations
resonated. The students’ lack of mentioning any other topic of discussion with their parents supported the formation of this theme. As the researcher, I found it alarming that students stated the only conversation centered on education from their parents is heavily concentrated in the area of grades. There is a big opportunity loss here for the parents and students. Conversation between the parent and student cannot merely exist around grades. Parents have a responsibility to communicate with their student about their entire education regularly.

“Beyond teachers and peers, families provide the main source of socialization for adolescents attending school. Also family involvement and attitudes toward school have a positive effect on a student’s sense of school belonging” Uslu, F., & Gizir, S. (2017).

Report card discussion was a repetitive theme from the student accounts; their parents showed interest in report cards and the grades they earned. The students mentioned the heavy influence of grades as topics of communication, but there needs to be more to communication that just grades. To fully support the student, parents need to have diverse conversations with their students around a wide range of topics. When interviewing the students, Sara and Ryan did not communicate they conversed with their parents about anything other than grades. Jason did communicate his parents talk to him about other topics than just grades. Jason and his parents have a balance in their communication. His parents talk to him about his future and how the work he is accomplishing will pay off in his future.

As previously stated in above discussions and research, parents have a direct link and correlation to the success of their children. Parents can provide emotional support and encouragement for their child. The research and findings express a lack of diverse conversations between the students and parents. Parents have an opportunity to benefit and maximize their
child’s academic and emotional output and conversations cannot merely consist of solely discussion surrounding grades. Conversations must be well-rounded and supportive of the child.

To prepare students for the future, parents and teachers can aid in the development of the student’s expressive communication and listening skills crucial to communicating. Expressive skills in language are ones that allow the individual to express feelings, thoughts and expressions. Expressive language enables the speaker to communicate successfully to the listener. Parents and teachers can support students in developing expressive skills, communication is a lifelong skill students will use in education and an eventual career. Students need to learn how to communicate effectively and gain the attention of their audience when speaking. Listening skills are also vital to the success of the student’s ability to effectively communicate, and must be taught to a student. Listening skills do not only exist in the classroom, but should be taught through normal conversations with peers and adults. A successful listener is one who can provide their undivided attention to the individual with whom are communicating.

Parents have a direct link to student success similarly to teachers. Communication is important to student success, and parents have a large part in the level of communication. Family involvement in student education has been linked with better school outcomes from pre-school through the high school years, and that is why the communication between the parent and student is vital (Belenordo, 2001; Bester, 2007; Makgato & Mji, 2006; Stewart, 2008). During the interviews, all the student participants mentioned overwhelmingly the conversations with their parents centered on grades and report cards.

**Summary.** Communication is an intrinsic part of a student’s education and maturity. Parents must have diverse conversation with their student. A parent cannot only focus on grades as the sole aspect of the student’s education. Parents must engage their students daily and add
value to their communication skills in speaking and listening. Family values are easily transferred through communication and core values are instilled in students through conversation at home with the family. Parents must make it a priority to communicate and learn from their student. Parents can learn a tremendous amount about their student and become better equipped to support them by listening and analyzing how and what they communicate.

**Investing in Relationships: Suggestions for Teachers, Parents, and School Administration**

Throughout this process, the participants expressed their unique experiences relating to education and parental involvement. Whether it was Jason’s high level of responsibility and motivation, or Sara’s desire for extracurricular activities that fueled her passions and support from her parents, or Ryan’s whole life balance approach to success, unique stories shined throughout this study. What resonated throughout the stories and the data collected was an importance and need for investment. Investment in the students, investment in the parents, investment in the school, and investment in the community. The teacher support in all aspects of the students’ lives and the students’ engagement with the community through volunteering and service projects all demonstrated a high level of investment. Each part of the school community has a responsibility to invest and provide for one another throughout the school year. Investment, is a clear overwhelming theme that presents itself as the focus for suggesting future interactions by teachers, parents, and school administration.

**Teacher investment in the student.** An invested teacher has power; power to add to and or change the trajectory of a student’s education. Teachers have a responsibility to provide each of their students with a balanced education that supports their individualized needs. Throughout the narratives, each student participant spoke about the investment was provided by their teachers and the impact it had. The individual investment provided by the teacher sparked a
connection and a professional relationship that enables both individuals to interact and learn from one another. Jason eluded to this when he mentioned that he and his teachers do not have any barriers in the way of their relationship and they are able to joke around; therefore, they are building a strong relationship through the investment from both parties. To maximize the potential of each student and building the necessary relationships, teachers should investigate and learn what motivates, engages, and captivates the student. In doing so, teachers will have an understanding of the student and how to better relate, work with, and communicate with each student. Liz did just that for Sara. Liz engaged Sara in an educational day about maturing as a lady and is now better able to relate to Sara. These actions will build the foundation of the student-teacher relation and enable the progression of the relationship. Barriers often outside of the teacher’s and school’s control get in the way of students’ education. Yet, when teachers personally invest in their students, this will ultimately allow them a better chance to make an impression academically and emotionally with the student.

Investing in the student does not only mean in their academics, but the student as an individual. Both Jason and Ryan mentioned the time their teacher Keith supported them outside of school and attended their sporting events. Due to the increased rigor and demand of academics, there is little time to develop the ‘whole child’ and their abilities to interact with peers and adults. Teachers must provide balance for their students, a balance of academics, global awareness, and social and emotional well-being. Both teachers in this study provide balance for the three students in the study and their classmates by involving community members, opportunities to give back, and attend events in the community. In developing this type of student, the teacher is setting them up for future success in the world outside of school. Teachers must invest by adding value, caring for, and respecting each individual in their
classroom. Teaching students what it means to succeed, preserver, care, and provide for another, and ultimately have compassion and appreciation for individuals and opportunities.

**Teacher investment in the parents.** Investing in parents will bridge the gap between home and school life. Liz mentioned that she communicates with parents through means possible and communicates in a variety of ways. Whether it be through phone conversation, text, email, flyer, or face to face communication during carpool, Liz bridges that communication gap that can exist between home and school. It is critical to student success that parents collaborate with teachers and the school in a supportive manner. Bridging this gap will benefit all parties involved and ultimately provide additional support for the student. When the parent becomes more aware of day to day school affairs, this will enable them to help their students in a variety of opportunities.

Parents need to feel that they are a part of the class, just like the students. Parents need to feel safe, secure, confident, and that they have a partnership with the teachers. Liz and Kevin both communicated their high level of communication with parents and how necessary it is for the success of the student. Parents approach education from diverse educational experiences and because of this, have diverse views; so it must be up to the teacher to invest in and provide them with information that will aid in feeling safe, secure, and confident in their role as the parent. Teachers can accomplish this by taking time to educate and provide necessary information to the parents on classroom activities as well as provide curriculum nights, opportunities to learn educational strategies just like the students, so the parents can help their students. As the curriculum coach, I help the school organize and provide curriculum night several time a year to share necessary curriculum information to help parents stay abreast of what their student is learning in class. The school also holds numerous critical conversations throughout the year.
Critical conversations are a time for the community to come together, grow, and learn about social issues that can divide us. But, through these conversations, the community learns how to overcome these barriers and leave better informed and equipped to support their student and family.

A more informed parent will have a direct impact on the success of their student. Teachers must understand the ‘current state’ of the parent, and what that parent goes through on a daily basis. This will help the parent and teacher relate to one another, and ultimately lead to better communication.

Teachers need to communicate in variety of ways to ensure that all parents have an opportunity to gain access to information from the teacher. Whether the communication comes through email, text, phone call, blog, social media, or flyer, the communication must get to the parent. Teachers need to be available at different time of the day, before, during, and after school, and Liz explained just this in her interview. Liz mentioned the way she approached communication with her students’ parents and the various modes that are necessary to reach all of them.

**Teacher investment in the community.** Teachers can invest in the school community by being a positive role model and additionally a prominent figure in the school community. The teacher should be active, attend events outside of school, and bridge the gap between school and the community. Liz and Keith are both active in the community and support the school by attending events outside of school, taking the students to local businesses, nursing homes, participating in Black History Month activities, and providing opportunities for students to give back. The students and school can benefit from the surrounding community and its members, and vice versa. By the teacher investing and learning more about the surrounding community,
neighborhoods, demographics, and daily lives of their students, they will be better able to serve and meet the individual needs of all their students. This can be achieved by driving around the community, meeting business owners, talking to neighbors, and visiting families at their homes. Teacher should also incorporate aspects and individuals from the community in their instruction. Invite community members inside the classroom, this will allow student to learn from and make a connection with their community. The strong the connection with the community, the more likely the students will be able to impact their surroundings.

**Parent investment in the students.** Parents, invest in your child’s education. Make it a priority. Parents cannot rely solely on the teacher and school to educate their child. Parents have a responsibility to their child and themselves to engage and learn what they are interested in and motivates them. Sara’s parents have done this for her; they learned what she enjoys, such as; dance, drumline, chorus, and running and have provided her with extracurricular outlets to in which to participate. Parents must support their students and be present in their academic and social lives. After learning what activities motivate the child, parents should find a way to support that interest by providing opportunities for your child, opportunities that will in enrich their lives. Establish a daily routine with your student allowing you to effectively communicate with them and provide the support necessary to be a successful individual.

Communication is key. Jason and his parents have a strong structure for communication: they communicate to and from school, at home during homework, and at dinner with the family. Communication resonated in the narratives of the students and teachers. Ryan, Sara, and Jason all spoke about the focus of communications centering around grades and report cards, but communication has to be much more than just about academics. Parents need to be invested in their student, understand their strengths and weaknesses, and what is happening in the classroom.
and around the school. The more the parent knows, the better they will be able to communicate with their student and support them in their growth. Communication is much more than, “How was your day?” or “What did you do today?” Parents need to get creative. Ask your child how they impacted someone else’s day, or how they apply what they did in class today to academic success. Form questions that engage, help your children make connections, and broaden their scope of education. Jason’s parents effectively communicate with him and provide motivation for his success. His parents communicated to him that he has a larger purpose and the means to succeed. Jason has taken that supportive communication and turned it into academic success. Parents must invest in their students by having critical conversations about not only what is happening in the classroom but what is happening in the world around them, make the student a global citizen by building their awareness of the world around them. Parents need to be that example for their students.

Parents need to stop and assess their current situation. Analyze how their day to day is impacting their student’s maturity and are they adding value to their student’s academic and social and emotional success. Analyze their student’s current interactions and personal investment in their own wellbeing. Offer support and be the person you want your student to become. Invest in their future by investing in yourself. Understanding your actions, values, and goals, will directly impact the growth of your child. Each family structure is different and the level of responsibility and free time differs throughout the school, but your child’s education should be a priority in your life. Every parent must be present in their student’s life. So much of the personal interactions and communication at home between the parent and student is carried into the classroom, so parents need to set an appropriate example for their student.
Parent investment in teachers. Just as teachers have a responsibility to build a relationship with the teacher, the same applies to the parent. Parents and teachers are working together to educate the student and promote student success. There must be a working relationship built on trust, respect, and communication between the teacher and parent. Parents need to get to know their child’s teachers and support them in a way that is must conducive to their abilities in relation to responsibilities and time constraints. During the interview, Kevin mentioned that when he needs supplies for the class, he has a group of parents that will always send stuff in when requested. All the parents of the student participants in the study have found their unique way of being involved and giving back that is different from one another. Jason’s mom is supportive of the teacher and provides resources for the class throughout the school year. Ryan’s parents support the school financially and his mother serves as the Community Council Co-Chair. Sara’s father has supported the school by writing and donating the school song to the school, the song is played every morning. Parents must communicate effectively with the teacher and pay attention to instructional materials their student brings home daily. Parents must also be aware of what is happening in the classroom and around the school community. Taking time to invest and understand what is be taught in the classroom and happening around the school, whether it is a fundraiser, school performance, academic platform; this will enable parents to better interact and help their children in their academic and social and emotional maturity.

Parent investment in the community. Parents must be a part of the school community. To be actively engaged, parents should attend school functions throughout the school year, attend parent teacher conferences, and support the school through positive interactions. Participation is not going to be the same for every family, but parents must find the type of
involvement that works for their family. Investment in the school also comes through respect and being a partner with the school in educating their student.

**School administration investment.** School administrations have a responsibility to invest in their school community. The school community incorporates the students, teachers, parents, and the members in the surrounding community. Schools need to offer students a wide variety of class offerings that not only teach rigorous standards, but possess life-enriching characteristics. Jason mentioned that he participates in character building activities through Destination Imagination and Design Thinking opportunities at school. The school’s goals, along with the teachers’ goal, is to maximize the students’ potential by investing in each individual student. Investing in the students’ abilities means to develop the whole child, because it is essential for students to be more than just academically aware; but, should be socially aware in today’s society. Schools must teach students values, morals, ambitious, courage, and sincerity. These characteristics will add to the development of the whole child.

Schools have a responsibility to provide relevant, progressive professional development for their teachers, which is individualized to meet their professional needs. School must support their teacher’s efforts and make it easier for teachers to support their students outside of school.

Schools have a responsibility to invest in the parents; to make sure they are connected, have an opportunity to be supportive in their student’s education and be involved in the school community. Schools invest in their students by differentiating instruction, and parents should be no different. School’s need to incorporate numerous ways to interact with parents. Not all parents will be able to invest and participate in the same manner, so it must be up to the school to find additional opportunities for the parents. Opportunities must be at various times to accommodate potential time restrictions on parent schedules. Educating the school community is the
responsibility and overall investment by the school. Schools have a unique opportunity to incorporate their core values and mission into educational opportunities for outside members, which will increase and maximize individuals’ potential.

What Students, Teachers, and Parents all do to Maximize Student Success

One thing that each entity involved in the development and success of the student can do to maximize student success, is to search out and participate in experiences. Experiences are interactions, enrichments, which add value to the student’s perspective. Experiences will enable the student to make connections in their life, relate to what they are learning in school, and have better relationships in their social interactions, whether it be with peers or adults.

Experiences will invest in and develop a global citizen. The students’ school has done what they can in their young existence to provide a well-rounded experience for the students. The school offers numerous extracurricular activities, Design Thinking, Destination Imagination, Project Based Learning, community service projects, and activities centered on diversity to provide a global education. In return, the student will understand their place in their community and society, and look for ways to impact their surroundings. Students, teachers, and parents can capitalize on becoming a global citizen in all aspects: at home, in the classroom, and for the students’ future. Students will bring this understanding into the classroom and be better equipped to have discussions, apply their understanding, and make the most of their academics.

Suggestions for Further Research

After collecting and analyzing the data it became evident that additional research around this topic is needed. The following are suggestions.
• The same study, but different participants. Different participants from the same school or different school will possible yield different results and provide additional information.

• The same study, but from the perspective of the parents and school personal. This perspective will yield interesting results that would benefit the students, parents, and teachers.

• Research into the area of effective communication between students and parents. This research will provide information and outcomes that would add to the conversation of communication.

• Research that is quantitative in nature, a questionnaire that would produce numerical data and analysis of student success.
References


Ludwig-Hardman, Stacey and Joanna C. Dunlap. (2003). Learner support services for on-line students: Scaffolding for success. In the International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning


Williams, T. T., & Sanchez, B. (2013). Identifying and Decreasing Barriers to Parent Involvement for Inner-City Parents. Youth & Society, 45(1), 54-74.


Appendix A
Student Interview Protocol

1. Tell me about your day, before, during, and after school?
   ► What is your favorite part of school and why?
   ► What type of relationship do you have with your teacher, why do you feel this way?

2. How do your parent(s) help you with your school work?
   ► How often do they help you?
   ► Do your parents work one on one with you or are they multitasking?

3. What do you think your parent(s) responsibilities are with regards to your education?
   ► How often do your parents talk to you about education and how you are doing in school? Tell me how those conversations go.
   ► What do you wish your parent(s) would be involved with more/less?

4. Why do you think you parents are motivated be involved in your education? Is there anything that makes it difficult for them to be involved?
   ► What do your parents spend the most time doing during their day?
   ► Is your parent active at your school?
Appendix B
Teacher Interview Protocol

1. Tell me about how you see parents of students in your homeroom involved in their child’s education? And tell how (or if) you see a connection between home-school and family relationship?
2. Tell me about level of parental involvement before and after school in your classroom and school building?
3. Tell me about some of the obstacles that you see prevents parents from being involved in their child’s education?
4. Tell me about some of the motivations that you believe encourages parents to be involved?
5. How often do you have parents to volunteer and assist you with inside and outside of school events, and explain how?
Title of Research Study: The Impact of Parental Involvement on Student Success: School and Family Partnership from the Perspective of Students

Researcher’s Contact Information: Tyler Bailey, 770.608.5560, and tybailey7@aol.com

Your child is being invited to take part in a research study conducted by Tyler Bailey of Kennesaw State University. Before you decide to allow your child to participate in this study, you should read this form and ask questions if you do not understand.

Description of Project

The purpose of the study: The purpose of this study is to understand the way students perceive the relationships between their parents/guardians and the school they attend. The study will focus on factors that relate to student success. This study will provide relevant information that will allow for recommendations to be given on bridging the gap between family and school and how to improve the educational success of the student.

Explanation of Procedures

Participants will participate in a 30 minute interview. During the interview session participants will provide their responses to four main and additional secondary questions that relate to the educational life of the students and how parents involve themselves.

Time Required

The interview should take 30 minutes to complete.

Risks or Discomforts

There is a slight risk, very unlikely, of psychological discomfort for the participants, especially the minors. If participants experience psychological discomfort they will be able to meet and work through their discomfort with the school counselor.

Benefits

The participants stand to gain a better understanding of their position within education, the influence they have on each other, possible outcomes that will improve the success of the student, and build a strong relationship between guardians and schools. Each participants will be made aware of this benefit at the start of each interview, all participates will understand that the benefit is mutual and will aid in helping all parties involved.

Compensation
There will be no compensation.

**Confidentiality**
The results of the participants will be anonymous. Participants will be able to select a name that will be used in the study to mask their identity. All data will be secured at all times. When data is not being analyzed, it will locked up in a filing cabinet in a locked room.

**Use of Online Surveys:**
No online surveys will be used.

**Inclusion Criteria for Participation**
The age group of the student will be 10 to 11 years of age, 5th grade. The student must have been in attendance at Westside for the full academic year. All student participates must be in the same class at Westside.
The teacher must teach all students who participate in the study. The teacher must have been teaching at Westside at the start of the 2017-2017 school year.

**Parental Consent to Participate**
I give my consent for my child, ______________________________________________________, to participate in the research project described above. I understand that this participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty. I also understand that my child may withdraw his/her assent at any time without penalty.

________________________________________________
Signature of Parent or Authorized Representative, Date

________________________________________________
Signature of Investigator, Date

____________________________________________________________
________________________
Child Assent to Participate

Research at Kennesaw State University that involves human participants is carried out under the oversight of an Institutional Review Board. Address questions or problems regarding these activities to the Institutional Review Board, Kennesaw State University, 585 Cobb Avenue, KH3403, Kennesaw, GA 30144-5591, (470) 578-2268.
My name is Tyler Bailey and I am inviting you to be in a research study about parental involvement and the relation to the level of student success. Your parent has given permission for you to be in this study, but you get to make the final choice. It is up to you whether you participate.

If you decide to be in the study, I will ask you to answer a series of question in relation to your daily routine, education, and parental involvement in relation to your education. The interview will be audibly recorded and field notes will be taken to make note of observations that will not be picked up by the recorder. The benefits to this study are learning more about your life as a student and the possibility of influencing how schools and parents interact in relation to bettering the education of other students. There is minimal risk associated with this study. If you do have any feelings or thoughts after the study, the counselor will be available to speak with you.

You do not have to answer any question you do not want to answer or do anything that you do not want to do. Everything you say and do will be private, and your parents will not be told what you say or do while you are taking part in the study. When I tell other people what I learned in the study, I will not tell them your name or the name of anyone else who took part in the research study. If a situation or comment arises making me aware of a potentially harmful situation that you are in, I will notify the authorities or health professionals as required.

If anything in the study worries you or makes you uncomfortable, let me know and you can stop. No one will be upset with you if you change your mind and decide not to participate. You are free to ask questions at any time and you can talk to your parent any time you want. If you want to be in the study, sign or print your name on the line below:

_____________________________________________
Child's Name and Signature, Date

Check which of the following applies

X Child is capable of reading and understanding the assent form and has signed above as documentation of assent to take part in this study.

☐ Child is not capable of reading the assent form, but the information was verbally explained to him/her. The child signed above as documentation of assent to take part in this study.

_____________________________________________
Signature of Person Obtaining Assent, Date
Appendix D
Teacher Consent Form

Title of Research Study:
The Impact of Parental Involvement on Student Success: School and Family Partnership from the Perspective of Students

Researcher’s Contact Information:
Tyler Bailey, 770.608.5560, and tybailey7@aol.com

Description of Project

The purpose of the study:
The purpose of this study is to understand the way students perceive the relationships between their parents/guardians and the school they attend. The study will focus on factors that relate to student success. This study will provide relevant information that will allow for recommendations to be given on bridging the gap between family and school and how to improve the educational success of the student.

Explanation of Procedures

Participants will participate in a 30 minute interview. During the interview session participants will provide their responses to four main and additional secondary questions that relate to the educational life of the students and how parents involve themselves.

Time Required
The interview should take 30 minutes to complete.

Risks or Discomforts
There is a slight risk, very unlikely, of psychological discomfort for the participants, especially the minors. If participants experience psychological discomfort they will be able to meet and work through their discomfort with the school counselor.

Benefits
The participants stand to gain a better understanding of their position within education, the influence they have on each other, possible outcomes that will improve the success of the student, and build a strong relationship between guardians and schools. Each participant will be made aware of this benefit at the start of each interview, all participants will understand that the benefit is mutual and will aid in helping all parties involved.

Compensation
There will be no compensation.

Confidentiality
The results of the participants will be anonymous. Participants will be able to select a name that will be used in the study to mask their identity. All data will be secured at all times. When data is not being analyzed, it will locked up in a filing cabinet in a locked room.

Use of Online Surveys:
No online surveys will be used.

Inclusion Criteria for Participation
The teacher must teach all students who participate in the study. The teacher must have been teaching at Westside at the start of the 2017-2017 school year.

Consent to Participate
I give my consent, ____________________________________________, to participate in the research project described above. I understand that this participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty.

________________________________________________
Signature of Participant, Date

________________________________________________
Signature of Investigator, Date

________________________________________________

PLEASE SIGN BOTH COPIES OF THIS FORM, KEEP ONE AND RETURN THE OTHER TO THE INVESTIGATOR

Research at Kennesaw State University that involves human participants is carried out under the oversight of an Institutional Review Board. Address questions or problems regarding these activities to the Institutional Review Board, Kennesaw State University, 585 Cobb Avenue, KH3403, Kennesaw, GA 30144-5591, (470) 578-2268.
Appendix E  
Institutional Review Board Application  

Review the IRB website for information about what type of IRB review applies to your study ([http://research.kennesaw.edu/irb/about/review-classifications.php](http://research.kennesaw.edu/irb/about/review-classifications.php))

*Review type:*

___ Check here for a Request for Exemption

X Check here for an Expedited Review [IRB Reviewers may recommend a Full Board Review]

*Status of Primary Investigator:*

___ Faculty    ___ Staff    X Student

*Students as the Primary Investigator (PI) and their Faculty Advisors*

Students (graduate and undergraduate) must have a faculty advisor complete the last page of this form and submit all documents from the faculty advisor’s KSU email address. Students must also use their KSU email address in all IRB correspondence.

*By submitting this form, you agree that you have read [KSU’s Federal-wide Assurance of Compliance](http://research.kennesaw.edu/irb/about/review-classifications.php) and agree to provide for the protection of the rights and welfare of your research participants as outlined in the Assurance. You also agree to submit any significant changes in the procedures of your project to the IRB for prior approval and agree to report to the IRB any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to subjects or others.*
Title of Research

The Impact of Parental Involvement on Student Success: School and Family Partnership from the Perspective of Students

Start Date is date of IRB approval

Proposed start date: 3/28/2017

*The official start date for research is the date the IRB approval letter is issued. Research activities may not begin prior to final IRB approval. Studies should be submitted well in advance of the proposed start date to allow for processing, review, and approval. If you have not received a letter from the IRB in 10 business days of submission, please call or email requesting status update.

Is your research being funded in any way? ___Yes* X No

*Where is the funding coming from? [Name of Federal Agency/Foundation/Department]

Primary Investigator

Name: Tyler Bailey

Department: Teacher Leadership

Telephone: 770 608 5560 Email: tmb0817@students.kennesaw.edu

FOR RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY STUDENTS AS THE PRIMARY INVESTIGATOR, GO TO THE LAST PAGE OF THE APPLICATION FORM TO ENTER REQUIRED FACULTY ADVISOR INFORMATION.

Co-Investigator(s) who are faculty, staff, or students at KSU
Co-Investigator(s) who are NOT employees or students at KSU: Please submit your human participants training certificate with application materials.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: Audric Newchurch</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:anewchur@students.kennesaw.edu">anewchur@students.kennesaw.edu</a></td>
<td>Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: Dr. Nicholas Clegorne</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:nclegorn@kennesaw.edu">nclegorn@kennesaw.edu</a></td>
<td>Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Name:  
Email:  
Home Institution:  

Additional Names (include status and email):  

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**ALL researchers listed on this application MUST have completed CITI training BEFORE an IRB Approval will be provided.**

Visit [http://research.kennesaw.edu/irb/citi-training.php](http://research.kennesaw.edu/irb/citi-training.php) for additional information about CITI training, how to choose the right course, and how to create a profile. ALL KSU faculty/staff/students MUST use their KSU provided email address on all correspondence.

**NOTE:** It is each researcher’s responsibility to ensure that the CITI Certificate does not expire during the course of the approved study. Failure to maintain a current certificate will invalidate your approval. Please use your KSU email address on your CITI profile and make sure your profile name matches the one provided above.
Does your research involve minors?  X Yes  ___No
See item number 5 below for parental consent and minor assent information. See http://research.kennesaw.edu/irb/consent-templates.php for forms and information.

Will this research involve COLLABORATION with ANOTHER INSTITUTION?

X Yes  No, go to question 1

If yes, provide the name of the Institution: Atlanta Public Schools

Has the other Institution conducted an IRB review of the study?

X No  ___Yes – Send that review with this approval form to the KSU IRB.

1. Prior Research

Have you submitted research on this topic to the KSU IRB previously? ___Yes* X  No

*If yes, list the date, title, name of investigator, and study number:


2. Description of Research

a. Purpose of and anticipated findings for this study:

The purpose of this study is to understand the way students perceive the relationships between their parents/guardians and the school they attend. The study will focus on factors that relate to student success. This study will provide relevant information that will
allow for recommendations to be given on bridging the gap between family and school and how to improve the educational success of the student.

b. Nature of data to be collected (interview (includes focus groups), online or hardcopy survey, observations, experimental procedures, etc.):
The data will be collected through interviews.

c. Data collection procedures: (include information on how consent will be obtained, how links will be provided, where interviews will be conducted, audio or video taping, etc.). Note: student email addresses are FERPA protected. Student email addresses, grades, or work cannot be collected without student consent and IRB approval.
Consent and assent forms will be signed before the interview by the guardian, student and teacher. This will granting permission for the student and teacher to participate in the interview/research process. Interviews will be conducted on campus and will be audio taped and field notes will be taken.

d. Survey instruments to be used (pre-/post-tests, interview and focus group questionnaires, online surveys, standardized assessments etc.). Attach all survey instruments with your application document):
The attached semi-structured interview protocol will be used to collect data.

e. Method of selection/recruitment of participants:
Refer to the KSU Mass Email policy on the use emails to faculty/staff. For student recruitment via email, please also follow these mandatory instructions. ALL recruitment materials (flyers, emails, posters, etc.) MUST include your IRB Approval Study # and a statement that your study has been reviewed and approved by KSU’s IRB.
Emails will be used to recruit participants. The recruitment email is attached

f. Participant age range: 10-11 for students 32-45 for teacher  Number: 4

Sex: ___Males  ___Females or  X Both

g. Incentives, follow-ups, compensation to be used: (e.g., Gift cards, course credit, etc.). Please visit HERE on our website for guidelines on participant incentive payments.
No incentives will be given to participants
3. Risks

Describe in detail any psychological, social, legal, economic, or physical risk that might occur to participants. *Note that all research may entail some level of risk, though perhaps minimal.*

According to the federal regulations at §46.102(i), *minimal risk* means that the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.

**X** There is minimal risk (if selected, must be reflected within consent documents)

___ There is more than minimal risk (requires full explanation below and in consent documents)

Anticipated risks include (if selected, specific potential risks must be incorporated into the consent documents):

- I do not anticipate any risk associated with this research, but if there is any risk associated with this study it is minimal.

If more than minimal risk is anticipated, describe your method for handling risk.

4. Benefits

Federal Guidelines and University policy require that risks from participation be outweighed by potential benefits to participants and/or humankind in general.

a. Identify potential benefits to participants resulting from this research (It is possible that there are no direct benefits or possible specific benefits, either must be reflected in the consent documents):
The benefits of this study will enable the researcher to provide recommendations to education institutions and parents on how to bridge the relational gap and provide support to the students leading to higher student success.

b. Identify benefits to humankind in general resulting from this research. While there may be no potential benefits to participants there must be some benefit to humankind in order to receive IRB approval. Please include these benefits in the consent documents:

The benefit to humankind is evident in the possible growth of the education system in relation to building strong relationships with families and students.

5. Informed Consent

All studies of human participants must include informed consent (see IRB approved templates). Consent may require a signature or may simply require that participants be informed. Minor participants must receive an assent form in conjunction with parental consent (see IRB approved templates). If deception is necessary, please justify and describe, and submit debriefing procedures.

What is the consent process to be followed in this study? Submit your consent form(s) with the application as a separate document(s).

Consent and assent forms will be signed before the interview take place.

6. Online Surveys

Will you use an online survey to obtain data from human participants in this study? Check all that apply.

X No. If no, skip to Question 7 below.

__ Yes, I will use an online survey to obtain data in this study. If yes:
a. How will **online data** be collected and handled? Select one and add the chosen statement to your consent document.

___ Data collected online will be handled in an anonymous manner and Internet Protocol addresses **WILL NOT** be collected by the survey program.

___ Data collected online will be handled in a confidential manner (identifiers will be used), but Internet Protocol addresses **WILL NOT** be collected by the survey program.

___ Data collected online will be handled in a confidential manner and Internet Protocol addresses **WILL** be collected by the survey program.

b. Include an “I agree to participate” and an “I do not agree to participate” answer at the bottom of your consent document. Program the “I do not agree to participate” statement to exclude the participant from answering the remainder of the survey questions (this is accomplished through "question logic" in Survey Monkey or “skip logic” in Qualtrics).

Ensure that the online consent document is the first page the participant sees after clicking on the link to your online survey.

Although you may construct your own consent document, see the IRB approved Online Survey Cover Letter template ([http://research.kennesaw.edu/irb/consent-templates.php](http://research.kennesaw.edu/irb/consent-templates.php)), which contains all of the required **elements of informed consent** that must be addressed within any online consent document.

7. **Vulnerable Participants**

Will minors or other vulnerable participants (e.g., prisoners, pregnant women, those with intellectual disabilities) be included in this research?

**X Yes.** Outline procedures to be used in obtaining the agreement ([parental consent, assent or guardian consent](http://research.kennesaw.edu/irb/consent-templates.php)) for vulnerable participants. Describe plans for obtaining consent of the parent, guardian, or authorized representative of these participants. For research conducted within the researcher’s own
classroom, describe plans for having someone other than the researcher obtain consent/assent so as to reduce the perception of coercion.

Parents will have the opportunity to read and give consent prior to their student partaking in the interview. Parents will have the opportunity to ask any questions and sign consent/assent forms before the interview.

___ No. All studies excluding minors as participants should include language within the consent document stating that only participants aged 18 and over may participate in the study.

8. Future Risks

How are participants protected from the potentially harmful future use of the data collected in this research? To prevent harmful future use of the data, the students name and school will be omitted from the study.

a. Describe measures planned to ensure anonymity or confidentiality. Studies can only be considered completely anonymous if no identifying information is collected; therefore, a cover letter must be used in place of a signed consent form.

To ensure the confidentiality of the students and teacher, student and teacher names will not be used in the process.

b. Describe methods for storing data while study is underway. Personal laptops are not considered secure.

The data will be locked in a filing cabinet in my office.

c. List dates and plans for storing and/or destroying data and media once study is completed. Please note that all final records relating to conducted research, including signed consent documents, must be retained for at least three years following completion of the research and must be accessible for inspection by authorized representatives as needed.

All data will destroyed 3 years after the dissertation is finalized. Projected completion date is 12/2017
d. If digital audio, video, or other electronic data are to be used, when will they be destroyed?

All data will be destroyed 3 years after the dissertation is finalized. Projected completion date is 12/2017

9. Illegal Activities

Will collected data relate to any illegal activities? __Yes* X No

This includes asking about illegal activities from participants or surveys containing any reference to illegal activities (e.g., questions requesting information about witnessing illegal behaviors that others have engaged in, minors drinking or using drugs, or any illegal drug use or violence of any nature that would result in legal action).

*If yes, please explain.

Is my Study Ready for Review?

Every research protocol, consent document, and survey instrument approved by the IRB is designated as an official institutional document; therefore, study documents must be as complete as possible. Research proposals containing spelling or grammatical errors, missing required elements of informed consent (within consent or assent documents), not addressing all questions within this form, or missing required documents will be classified as incomplete.

All studies classified as incomplete may be administratively rejected and returned to the researcher and/or faculty advisor without further processing.
If you are a non-KSU researcher wishing to recruit participants from the KSU campus, please follow these instructions:  [http://research.kennesaw.edu/irb/about/external-international-research.php](http://research.kennesaw.edu/irb/about/external-international-research.php)

Student researchers make sure that your faculty advisor completes the following page and sends all study related material from their KSU email address to irb@kennesaw.edu. Failure to follow this procedure will result in a significant delay in the approval process.

RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE STUDENTS AS PRIMARY INVESTIGATORS

All undergraduate and graduate students who will be acting as the Primary Investigator must be under the direct supervision of a faculty advisor. The faculty advisor must review the IRB application materials and agree to supervise the student’s proposed human subject research project by completion and submission of this routing sheet.

All application materials must be submitted by the faculty advisor from their KSU email address to irb@kennesaw.edu. Students may not submit their materials to the IRB for the first review; however, subsequent revisions can be sent directly to irb@kennesaw.edu with a cc to your advisor and MUST come from your KSU provided email account.

FOR RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY STUDENTS OR NON-FACULTY STAFF. This study, if approved, will be under the direct supervision of the following faculty advisor who is a member of the KSU faculty:

**Faculty Advisor**

Name:
By checking the items below and submitting all materials from your KSU email, the faculty advisor for this project attests the following:

___ I have personally reviewed each of my student’s IRB application documents (approval request, exemption request, informed consent documents, child assent documents, survey instruments, etc.) for completeness, and all documents pertaining to the conduct of this study are enclosed (consents, assents, questionnaires, surveys, assessments, etc.)

___ I have completed the Social/Behavioral Research course (Biomedical version only for medical/biological human studies) CITI training course in the ethics of human subject research within the past three years as have all researchers named within this application.

___ I approve this research and agree to supervise the student(s) as the study is conducted.

Date: __________