MIDDLE LEVEL PRINCIPALS' PARENT INVOLVEMENT PRACTICES

by

Tracie V. Tomichek-Michalowski

Bachelor of Arts, Chatham University, 1995

Master of Education, Duquesne University, 2002

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This dissertation was presented

by

Tracie Virginia Tomichek-Michalowski

It was defended on

March 27, 2017

and approved by

William Bickel, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, Administrative and Policy Studies

Michael Gunzenhauser, Ph.D., Associate Dean, Administrative and Policy Studies

Mary Margaret Kerr, Ed.D., Professor, Administrative and Policy Studies

Diane Kirk, Ph.D., Clinical Associate Professor, Administrative Policy and Studies

Advisor: Charlene Trovato, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Administrative and Policy Studies

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Tracie Virginia Tomichek-Michalowski, EdD

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The purpose of the exploratory research study was to identify middle level principals' parent involvement practices. Parent involvement impacts students in positive ways, and a principal must have the ability to involve parents. The job description of a principal can be difficult to place on paper. Principals multitask throughout the day and often shift from leader to conflict resolver in a moment's notice while also focusing on the safety and overall well-being of the entire school community. Principals play a significant role in making parents an integral part of the school by involving them in their child's educational process. Principals need to develop a supportive and welcoming environment for both students and parents.

The review of literature examines reasons why teachers may or may not involve parents, explains different models of parent involvement, and identifies barriers to parent involvement. Knowing the principal plays a key role in facilitating parent involvement, the overall aim of the exploratory study is to examine middle level principals' parent involvement practices.

Middle level principals in the western region of Pennsylvania were surveyed to determine how their current practices aligned with Joyce Epstein's six parenting practices which include parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. Findings indicate middle level principals engage in using practices within

all six categories. Findings also indicate principals can improve practices that are more individualized for students and families. A need for professional development for principals and teachers in order to involve parents into the school community was identified.

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PREFACE

One does not accomplish anything alone, and I have never been alone in this process. Spike, thank you for always being encouraging and believing in me. It is hard to believe the 18 year girl you met almost 30 years ago has come this far! We still have a ways to go, together. To my family, especially my sister Johnna, and friends, I really was writing all those times you asked me to go out and having to call me Dr. Michalowski (all the time) proves it! I would like to thank my dissertation advisor, Dr. Trovato, whose supportive and kind guidance was exactly what I needed. To my committee, Dr. Bickel, Dr. Gunzenhauser, Dr. Kerr, and Dr. Kirk, thank you for sharing your expertise and knowledge and allowing me to flourish.

To my parents, how deeply I wish you were here so I could make you proud. You taught me kindness, love, compassion, resiliency, and perseverance. I have put these skills to good use through this journey. I know that you will always be a part of everything I do.

Ian and Rachel, go for "it" whatever "it" might be!

1.0   INTRODUCTION

There is no higher compliment than to be entrusted to positively shape the minds of young people who are the future leaders of this world. Parents entrust educators to do this every day while their children are in school. Parents need to know about the daily events taking place while their child is at school in order to follow-up at home and take an active role in the educational process. Ensuring the success of a child is a collaborative process; principals, teachers and parents must work together to support a child throughout his or her education. Parental support for education can be traced back to the colonial times when formal education was shaped in America. Parents were involved in various aspects of education including hiring of teachers and choosing topics of studies which included religious studies (Vinovskis, 1987). Parents were engaged in schooling and were able to make collaborative decisions about the educational process. Decisions regarding hiring and curricula are now assigned to school district personnel. A shift has occurred, and through the years parents have become less engaged and involved in the educational process. Engagement and involvement are not the same and need to be clearly defined as this study focuses of parent involvement.

Two terms used in discussions about parent-school relationships are *parent engagement* and *parent involvement*. These terms are sometimes used interchangeably, but this dissertation focuses on the term, parent involvement. Ferlazzo (2011) stated parent involvement is a term used when parents are told what to do and parent engagement is a term used when parents are

collaborating with the school. Ultimately, a partnership between parents and school personnel should exist. However, parents need to become involved in the educational process before they can truly be engaged in it. Therefore, the focus of literature in Chapter 2 is on parent involvement, because it leads to sustainable and meaningful parental inclusion.

Parents complement the school process. Parents know their children best and can assist in helping teachers know how to make learning meaningful and lead to a child's success. Hoover-Dempsey, Sandler, and Walker (1995) recognized the importance of parent involvement and emphasized the need to study parent motivators. They wrote, "Educators, policy makers, and researchers have long focused on parental involvement as a complement to the fundamental importance of strong teaching and curricula to student achievement" (p. 40). Schecter and Sherry (2008) stated that "in recent years, the concept of parent involvement in education has become a common lens through which to explore and understand the relationships between schools and families" (p. 60).

Furthermore, teachers and parents working together can enhance the educational process by improving attendance, diminishing behavioral problems, improving reading and writing skills, and increasing test scores (Comer & Hayes, 1991; Epstein, 2008). Parental involvement in education is so critical that United States presidents have identified the importance of parent involvement and supported legislation such as Goals 2000 Educate America Act, Elementary and Secondary Act, and No Child Left Behind, which all encourage parent involvement (McNeal, 2012).

Parents may believe they are sufficiently involved in their child's education, but several studies indicate over time parent involvement has decreased (Bakker, Dennessen, & Brus-Laeven, 2007; Halsley, 2005; Hindin, 2010). The difference in teacher and parent perceptions of

parent involvement creates a gap in the educational process, and it is important to understand what affects involvement on both the teacher and parent side of this collaboration. Therefore, the review of literature in Chapter 2 contributes to a better understanding of parent involvement in schools.

However, throughout the literature review there is also an emerging key factor in parent involvement which is the role of the principal. After noting the importance of parent involvement at the high school level, Dornbusch and Ritter (1988) concluded the role of the principal is crucial to the successful development and implementation of an effective parental involvement program, administrators must consider ways to promote parent activity in the school community. Griffith (2001) studied principals' leadership in parent involvement and found the behavior of a principal influences the amount of parent involvement in a school, and principals who develop a supportive environment and positive school climate within a school had higher levels of parent involvement. Richardson (2009) studied principal's perceptions of parent involvement and stated under the leadership of a principal who communicates the value of parents, school personnel can strengthen the appreciation parents have of their important role in the school.

The literature review begins by examining how practicing and pre-service teachers' self-efficacy and their personal beliefs about parent involvement come to fruition based on Bandura's social cognitive theory. In reading this, one will come to understand why some teachers may or may not believe in parent involvement practices. Next, parent involvement models are described to understand the various ways involvement can occur at home, school, and within the extended community. There is no perfect parent involvement model. However, reviewing the literature highlights various models used in education to facilitate or measure parent involvement. The review also looks at various research findings to indicate both positive and negative aspects of

parent involvement. Literature regarding barriers that may impede parental involvement is also reviewed in order to understand and explain why parents may be hesitant or unable to become involved in their own child's education. In addition, highlighting barriers as to why parents may not get involved in their child's education allows teachers to move beyond the assumption that a parent does not care and develop practices that facilitate parent involvement.

The need for parent involvement is evident, as well as the key role principals play in facilitating parent involvement within the school community. The review of literature examines how teachers affect parent involvement, explains different models of parent involvement, and identifies barriers to parent involvement. Then by knowing the key role the principal plays in facilitating parent involvement, the overall aim of the exploratory study is to examine middle level principals' parent involvement practices.

1.1   PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to determine middle level principals' parent involvement practices. A review of the literature indicates a gap in the research at the middle school level as many of the studies focusing on parent involvement have been conducted at the elementary level. In addition, parent involvement studies are often conducted with students, teachers and parents. Research indicates when parents are involved in their child's education the attendance rate is high, behavioral problems diminish, reading and writing skills improve, and test scores increase (Comer & Hayes, 1991; Epstein, 2008). Research suggests a teacher's ability to facilitate parent involvement can be affected by his or her personal beliefs, self-efficacy, confidence, and personal experiences. Parents do not always feel welcomed into schools, language barriers

prevent involvement, and psychological factors can keep parents from becoming involved in school (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Matuszny, Devender, & Coleman, 2007; Trotman, 2001). Griffith (2001) found principals play a role in facilitating parent involvement; principals who develop a supportive environment and positive school climate within a school had higher levels of parent involvement. This study allows the researcher to collect data to determine principals' practices of parent involvement at the middle level. Joyce Epstein is a leading researcher on the topic of parent involvement. Epstein's (1995, 2002, 2011) research focuses on creating a partnership between parents, teachers, students, and others in order to create a caring community around students. Her theoretical model, Overlapping Spheres of Influence, serves as a basis for creating a partnership in order to support a student. In addition, Epstein (1995) created a typology which identifies six parent involvement categories, each with specific practices, used to facilitate parent involvement:

1. Parenting

2. Communicating

3. Volunteering

4. Learning at home

5. Decision making

6. Collaborating with the community

Epstein and colleagues (1995) created a survey, Measures of School, Family, and Community Partnerships, in order to assist schools in collecting data to determine parent involvement. This survey collects data based on Epstein's typology. Revising the existing Measures of School, Family, and Community Partnerships survey and administering it to middle

level principals allowed the researcher to identify principals' practices of parent involvement at the middle level.

1.2   STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Several key findings regarding parent involvement assist in shaping this study. Epstein et al. (2002) concluded schools' lack of effort to implement partnerships with parents contribute to the decline of parent involvement across grade levels. They also found students entering adolescence prefer to have parents less visible. Parents are less familiar with the higher level curriculum which can contribute to them assisting less at home. In addition, secondary teachers are unsure how to include parents at the secondary level.

Research indicates attendance, academic achievement, behavior, attitude, and mental health of children improve when parents are involved in the educational process (Comer & Hayes, 1991; Epstein, 2008; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Since parent involvement impacts students in positive ways, a principal must have the ability to involve parents. However, studies on middle level principals' parent involvement practices are lacking. This study looks to close the gap by studying middle level principals' parent involvement practices by using Epstein's typology.

1.3   RESEARCH QUESTION

This study uses three research questions as the basis to learn more about middle level principals' parent involvement practices. The research questions are designed to collect in-depth data about middle level practices toward fostering parental involvement in education. The practices are aligned to Epstein's typology. The research questions are as follows:

1. To what extent do middle level prinicpals' parent involvement practices compare to Epstein's exemplary *practices* in the typology?

2. To what extent do middle level principals' parent involvement practices align to Epsteins's six parent involvement *categories*: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with community?

3. How do middle level principals parent involvement practices vary by years of experience, years leading at current school, gender, percentage of free and/or reduced meals within the school student population, and the geographical location of the school?

1.4   SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This quantitative study examined middle level principals' parent involvement practices. The theoretical framework from Epstein (1995) was used. Epstein developed a typology with six parent involvement categories including; parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. The literature review details many reasons why parents may not get involved, and it also indicates principals play a key role in involving parents into the educational process. However, a gap in the research hinders a true

understanding of the current practices middle level principals use to involve parents, especially when aligning the practices to Epstein's typology. This study is significant because it allowed middle level principals to answer questions about their current practices of parent involvement.

The data collected aligned principals' responses to Epstein's individual practices and each category. This allows middle level principals to better understand current parent involvement practices being used or the lack of practices being used. This study will be useful to help current middle level principals change their current practices (if needed) to better involve parents which leads to a child's overall academic and social success.

1.5   DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

The following definitions assist the reader in becoming familiar with key terms used throughout various studies cited in this dissertation.

1. Parent Involvement-Refers to the teachers', schools', or child's request to parents to assist at school or at home to benefit the educational process of the child (Epstein, 1985).
2. Parent Involvement at Home-Parent-child interactions on school-related or other learning activities that represent the direct investment of a parent's resources in his or her child's education (Sheldon, 2002).
3. Parent Involvement at School-Parent interactions with teachers and other school personnel that can affect student achievement because parents are demonstrating to their child that education is important (Sheldon, 2002).
4. Self-efficacy-Beliefs in one's capability to act in ways that will produce the desired outcomes (Bandura, 1997).

5. Role Construction- Defines parents' beliefs about what they are supposed to do in their children's education and appears to establish the basic range of activities that parents construe as important, necessary, and permissible for their own actions with and on behalf of their children (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

6. Roles-Sets of expectations or beliefs held by individuals and groups for behaviors of individual members (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

7. Reactive Hypothesis-"Any negative correlation or relationship between parent involvement and academic achievement stems from a reactive parent involvement strategy whereby a student having academic difficulty or behavioral difficulty leads to greater parent involvement i.e., checking in" (McNeal, 2012, p. 79).

8. Monitoring-Parent involvement in which parents monitor a child's behavior out of concern for their child's well-being. This translates into improved educational performance (McNeal, 2012).

9. Parent-child communication-Parents convey to their child the importance of schooling. Discussions also allow a parent to identify when their child becomes disengaged in schooling (McNeal, 2012).

10. Educational support practices-Parents directly involved in educational practices in which they engage their child. Teachers identify that parents are involved, which may lead to greater attention from the teacher because they are aware the parent is involved (McNeal, 2012).

2.0   REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The review of literature was conducted to acquire a solid understanding of parent involvement including teachers' practices of parent involvement and how self-efficacy affects their ability to involve parents, various models used to involve parents, as well as reasons why parents may not get involved in the educational process. Reviewing the literature on various aspects of parent involvement set the foundation for understanding the benefits students receive when parents are involved. Researching the various aspects of parent involvement framed the need for this study as it became evident principals play an integral role in facilitating parent involvement and a gap exists in research conducted at the middle level.

2.1   HOW DO TEACHERS' SELF-EFFICACY AND PERSONAL BELIEFS CONTRIBUTE TO THEIR PRACTICES REGARDING PARENT INVOLVEMENT?

Educators teach students academic, social, and moral lessons that guide them to become productive citizens in this world.   Teaching these skills effectively is imperative. If an administrator walks into the classroom, he or she will look at the content being delivered, classroom management, and/or lesson structure to determine if the teacher is effective. Administrators may even collect data to note student involvement in learning. Additionally, it is important for administrators to witness a teacher's ability to involve parents in the learning

process. Measuring parent involvement is not as easy as observing student involvement since parent involvement occurs in many ways both inside and outside of the school setting. However, a keen principal can tell which teachers desire and value working with parents by noting newsletters going home, emails being sent to parents, classroom projects involving parents, effective parent-teacher conferences, and/or websites that ask for parent involvement in homework or other assignments. Principals collecting data to gauge parent involvement is as easy as requiring teachers to document emails and phone calls home. If a teacher does not involve parents on any level, principals must explore why.

One major reason teachers may not involve parents is their own self-efficacy. Teachers' personal beliefs and self-efficacy affect their own willingness and ability to involve parents, which can ultimately affect student outcomes (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Bandura's (1989, 1997) social cognitive theory sheds light on the notion that behavioral, personal, and environmental factors contribute to why teachers may or may not feel comfortable involving parents.

2.1.1 Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura's social cognitive theory stems from the field of psychology, but his work is accepted by many disciplines including the field of education. Bandura (1989, 1997) explained social cognitive theory as a triadic causal structure in which behavior, personal factors, and environment influence each other in a bidirectional manner, which in turn influences human functioning and learning. Human functioning and learning take place through observation of others and is on-going in a social context. Figure 1 depicts the bidirectional relationship behavior, personal factors, and environment has on learning.
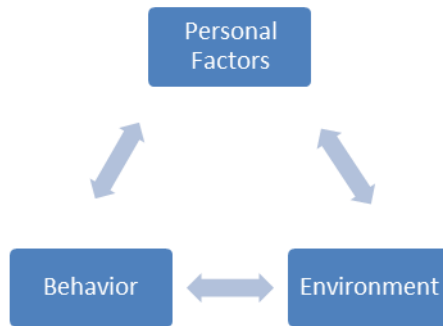
Figure 1. Social cognitive theory bidirectional relationship

Bandura's social cognitive theory, a framework for understanding human functioning, is broken down into five central concepts including observational learning/modeling, outcome expectations, goal setting, self-regulation, and perceived self-efficacy. Denier, Wolters, and Benzon (2014) concisely described the concepts in the framework. Observational learning/modeling is vicarious learning done through watching behavior and consequences of observable models within the environment. This type of learning is dependent on a four-step process of attention, retention, production, and motivation. Outcome expectations form the behaviors people perform or suppress based on consequences or valued responses. Goal setting is a cognitive process in which a person thinks about a desired outcome and then plans how to reach the goal. Through observation/modeling, one can develop a goal and put a plan into action. Self-regulation is one's ability to manage his or her own action in order to reach a desired outcome (or goal). Self-regulation is done through self-observation, self-judgment, and/or self-reflection. The last central concept is perceived self-efficacy, which is a focus area of this literature review.

Each of these four concepts shape human behavior, thus each can be linked to teachers' personal and professional lives. Focusing on perceived self-efficacy assists in understanding the

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different beliefs teachers possess regarding parent involvement regardless of training or school interventions. Bandura (1997) defined perceived self-efficacy as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the course of actions required to produce given attainments" (p. 3). A person who has a high level of perceived self-efficacy believes he or she can accomplish an activity based on his or her own capabilities. If a teacher has a high level of self-efficacy and believes there are benefits to parent involvement, he or she will try to execute the course of action required to attain parent involvement.

2.1.2 Self-efficacy and Teachers

Bandura (1997) provided an example of how self-efficacy affects an individual in order to understand the relationship between self-efficacy and a teacher's belief that he or she can involve parents successfully (or complete other tasks):

> People's beliefs in their self-efficacy have diverse effects and influence the courses of action people choose to pursue, how much effort they put forth in given endeavors, how long they will persevere in the face of obstacles and failures, their resiliency to adversity, whether their thought patterns are self-hindering or self-aiding, how much stress and depression they experience in coping with taxing environmental demands, and the level of accomplishments they realize. (p. 3)

According to this framework, teachers who have a high level of self-efficacy possess the perseverance and resiliency to strategize ways to involve parents. Teachers who believe they are capable of involving parents do. A teacher's self-efficacy directly impacts his or her ability and desire to involve parents.

Self-efficacy can change throughout a teacher's career (Gibson & Dembo, 1984), and this change may lead to a decline in the ability or desire to involve parents. A teacher's level of self-efficacy can change based on what they are teaching or can be content specific or content matter specific (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Teachers, who are knowledgeable about the content they deliver and feel capable to deliver it, most often experience a high level of self-efficacy. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) also found teachers may have a high level of self-efficacy while working with particular types of students. In contrast, teachers with a low level of self-efficacy were found to try less to reach the learning needs of their students (Pendegrast, Garvis, & Keogh, 2011). These findings about self-efficacy make a strong statement about placing teachers at the appropriate level teaching the content desired. Teachers are encouraged to have multiple certifications in order to sustain employment during job cuts and budgetary constraints. Placing teachers in areas in which they may not truly desire to teach (even though appropriate certification exists) can affect their self-efficacy and student achievement (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Findings on teachers' self-efficacy shed light as to why a teacher may not want to involve parents.

It should be noted that a teacher with a high level of self-efficacy is different from a teacher with confidence, because self-efficacy and self-esteem are different concepts and should not be used interchangeably. Bandura (1997) stated, "self-esteem is concerned with judgments of self-worth" (p. 11). Self-efficacy is one's belief in his or her abilities to do tasks to get something done. It is evident that a teacher's self-efficacy can contribute to his or her desire to facilitate parent involvement. If a teacher desires to involve parents because they understand the benefits of parent involvement, a high level of self-efficacy can make the involvement process easier.

Bandura's framework of social cognitive theory has been used by researchers to ground their own studies focusing on teacher self-efficacy (Dellinger et al., 2008; Erdme & Demirel, 2007; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987; Stipnek, 2012). Research about teacher self-efficacy has occurred across grade levels, content matter, and countries. The common thread between these studies is a positive correlation between teacher self-efficacy and the ability to involve parents. Involving parents leads to positive outcomes for students.

2.1.3 Benefits of Teacher Self-efficacy for Students and Schools

Research links a teacher's sense of self-efficacy to student outcomes. Teachers with a high level of self-efficacy positively affect student achievement and motivation (Midgley, Feldhaufer & Eccles, 1989; Ross, 1992). Teachers who develop a high sense of self-efficacy tend to embrace new ideas and experiment with new teaching methods to meet students' needs (Berman et al., 1977; Guskey, 1988; Stein & Wang, 1988). Gibson and Dembo (1984) found classrooms are more conducive to learning and promote a positive culture when the teacher reports having a high level of sense of self-efficacy. Teachers who describe themselves as having a high level of efficacy are more likely to promote motivation and create learning opportunities that facilitate academic progress (Bandura, 1993). As stated above, students benefit in numerous ways when interacting with teachers who possess a high level of self-efficacy. A teacher who has a high level of self-efficacy and believes he or she is capable of getting a task done is likely eager to involve parents.

Students benefit when instructed by teachers who have a high level of self-efficacy; these benefits extend into the school community as students become confident, life-long learners. Stein

and Wang (1988) found that teachers with high levels of self-efficacy were more effective when implementing school change. Teachers who believe they are capable of implementing a program were able to do so with great success. Teachers continued to value the program as time passed. When reviewing program implementation over time, Stein and Wang also found, "star implementers exhibited marked gains in their perceptions of self-efficacy while the less successful teachers evidenced a decrease in their levels of self-efficacy" (1988, p. 182). In other words, as teachers believed in themselves and their ability to complete the implementation, self-efficacy levels increased.

In linking Stein and Wang's theory to Bandura's social cognitive theory, it becomes apparent that when a school identifies a need to implement programs, especially those initiating parent involvement, the success of the program may depend on the levels of self-efficacy teachers possess. The comfort level of working together is compromised when teachers believe they cannot build successful relationships when working with parents. Teachers need to be knowledgeable in what they teach students; they also need believe they can learn from parents. Teacher buy-in is one aspect related to the success of any new program. However, teachers also need to believe in their capabilities to implement the program.

Teachers interact with parents in various ways including phone calls to discuss grades, face-to-face meetings during parent-teacher conferences, and/or casually during school activities. Some teachers are comfortable creating projects and activities that take place in the home and involve parents interacting with their child. Other teachers balk at the thought of communicating with a parent for any reason. The need to involve parents can be challenging, and although self-efficacy can be directly related to a teacher's ability or desire to include parents, there are additional reasons why teachers may not feel comfortable working with parents.

2.1.4 Personal Experience

Research shows personal experiences affect a teacher's ability or willingness to involve parents. Caspe (2003) studied how teachers understood families and found that teachers use communication and observation to learn about students and their families. Teachers noted conversations with parents both formally and informally as well as observing parent-student interactions help them to understand families. Teachers noted resources brought to school (notebooks, backpacks, binders, etc.) and the cleanliness of students in their observations. Teachers also communicated with other staff members in the school to learn about the history of families. All the gathered data was measured against their personal beliefs and experiences with similar students and families to understand current students. Caspe (2003) also noted that it is possible that teachers then use their personal experiences to judge families in a positive or negative manner. If this does occur, teachers may then expect more or less parent involvement based on how other similar families have participated inside or outside of the classroom.

Caspe's (2003) findings regarding how teacher's come to understand families connects with Bandura's triadic structure in which relationship behaviors, personal factors, and environment influence learning. The triadic structure can relate to how teachers learn about the benefits of parent involvement. Teachers who experienced positive interaction with their own parents being involved in their education or were raised in a family that values education are more likely to see the value in parent involvement and take steps to facilitate it within the classroom. By using the social cognitive theory, teachers who experience and believe parent involvement is positive would likely develop a high level of self-efficacy, and therefore, involve parents.

In contrast, teachers who have only experienced the "traditional family structure" in their own lives may encounter struggles when dealing with less traditional family structures. Teachers need to be aware of the various family structures and be able to communicate effectively with all involved. Souto-Manning and Swick (2006) presented an argument to make it clear that the traditional family paradigm is not the only paradigm that should be recognized in schools. Many families have working mothers who interact with children over the phone due to night work schedules. Families also include grandparents or aunts and uncles acting as parents. Cultural differences are prevalent in schools, and resources make a difference in what families can and cannot do for their children (hire tutors, participate in outside activities, etc.). Teachers who have limited experience with non-traditional families may not know or understand how to involve parents in a positive and meaningful manner.

Epstein (1995) found that many teachers are trained in the traditional family involvement paradigm reminiscent of the 1950s. Mothers take the lead role in the educational process, students come from a two-parent home, and the economic status is middle class. This creates a clouded understanding of families and parent involvement for even the most veteran teachers. Many teachers are not adequately prepared to develop involvement strategies for the various family structures of the 21st century. If training does not shift, not only will practicing teachers struggle to involve parents, new teachers will also not be prepared to work with various types of families. In addition to in-service teachers, it is imperative to review literature to determine personal beliefs of pre-service teachers regarding parent involvement and the development of involvement practices.

2.1.5 Self-efficacy and Pre-service Teachers

All of the studies referenced thus far have all looked at parent involvement from the perspective of the practicing teacher. Pre-service teachers are an untapped sample. Far less research focuses on pre-service teachers and their beliefs about parent involvement. Although pre-service teachers may be limited in their direct experiences with students and families, college course work should prepare them for the collaborative role in facilitating parent involvement. Several studies of pre-service teachers noted that no standalone courses were offered at the college level; instead, parent involvement topics were touched upon in literary courses and introductory courses (Baum & Swick, 2008; Graue & Brown, 2003; Hindin, 2010; Uldag, 2008). Throughout coursework, pre-service teachers receive small doses of information regarding parent involvement strategies, but not much else. Uldag (2008) stated, "The failure to address parent involvement in both university and professional development contexts sends a message that it is unimportant" (p. 809). Since pre-service teachers are not learning about parent involvement in their coursework, one must look further into the literature to identify how pre-service teachers develop beliefs and knowledge about parent involvement.

The literature that states teachers develop beliefs through personal experiences is similar for pre-service candidates. Graue (2005) found pre-service teachers' recollections of their own parents' interactions with teachers shaped their beliefs about how teachers and parents should work together. Hindin (2010) surveyed pre-service teachers before and after student teaching. On completion of student teaching, pre-service teachers indicated cooperating teachers assisted them in developing beliefs as well as strategies. Most pre-service teachers indicated phoning home or sending a note was the best way to involve parents, as this is what the cooperating teacher practiced. Pre-service teachers placed in urban settings indicated their cooperating teachers

described negative family interactions more often than pre-service teachers placed with cooperating teachers in suburban settings. Data indicate pre-service teachers may enter the profession with negative feelings about parent involvement in urban settings purely based on the experiences had through the cooperating teacher (Hindin, 2010). Most importantly, Hindin found, "no candidates saw parents' roles as informing teachers about home school educational practices" (p.86). This indicates the lack of understanding pre-service teachers have regarding the collaborative nature of parent involvement. Parents provide valuable information to teachers. Teachers need to welcome opportunities to involve parents to gather this information to best meet the needs of students. Perhaps the most alarming, yet most significant finding from Hindin was that two candidates completed student teaching noting no communication or involvement with parents.

The literature indicates pre-service teachers recognize the importance of parent involvement (Baum & Swick, 2008; Graue & Brown, 2003; Hindin, 2010; Patte, 2011; Uldag, 2008). It also indicates pre-service teachers form beliefs from their own childhood experiences and from their student teaching experience. Overall, pre-service teachers know the importance of building positive home-school relationships; however, they lack the knowledge and training to do it effectively. In fact, Patte (2011) indicated, "over 40% of pre-service teachers surveyed reported learning no specific skills or competencies concerning the development of family school partnerships in any of their coursework" (p. 153). Pre-service teachers need more training and development to learn and implement parent involvement practices. However, there are again those pre-service teachers who easily connect with students and families. Regardless of training, or lack thereof, they are able to establish strategies to involve parents with ease. This keen ability to connect with students and families with little formal training harkens back to Bandura's social

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cognitive theory. These pre-service teachers most likely have developed a high level of self-efficacy because they have experienced relationship behaviors, personal factors, and an environment, Bandura's triadic structure, that contributed to their ability to positively relate to students and parents.

Research shows teachers' self-efficacy, whether practicing or pre-service, impacts parent involvement. Research has shown students directly benefit from parents being involved in the educational process. Traditional involvement, such as conferences and volunteer work, has been broadened and extended to include home and community involvement. As education and the traditional family paradigm evolved, so has the research on parent involvement. Researchers developed various models that measure levels of involvement and define types of involvement. In the field of education various models have been used in research in order to study parent involvement.

2.2   WHAT MODELS/FRAMEWORKS OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT ARE USED IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION?

Parent involvement models are plentiful. Reviewing literature to learn about various models leads to a better understanding of parent involvement. As stated in the introduction, parent engagement is optimal, but before parent engagement can occur, parents need to be involved. Therefore, the focus for this section of the literature review is on parent involvement. Parent involvement has traditionally involved supervising field trips, baking cupcakes, or helping with field day. The reviewed literature indicates parent involvement is not as simplistic as "volunteering."

2.2.1 Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Model

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) created a multivariate model to better understand the psychological component to parent involvement process. Five levels of constructs were developed defining patterns of influence and critical points of parent involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). In order to increase effectiveness of parent involvement, the psychological variables of parents' decisions to become involved must be understood (Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2005). This review is of the revised model depicted in Figure 2.

(Level 5)	Student Achievement					

(Level 4)	Student Attributes Conducive to Achievement					
Academic Self-Efficacy	Intrinsic Motivation to Learn		Self-Regulatory Strategy Use		Social Self- Efficiay Teachers	

(Level 3)	(Mediated by) Student Perceptions of Parent Learning Mechanisms					
Encouragement	Modeling		Reinforcement		Instruction	

(Level 2)	Learning Mechanisims Engaged by Parents During Involvement Activites					
Encouragement	Modeling		Reinforcement		Instruction	

Parent Involvement Forms						
Values, Goals, etc...	Home Involvement Achievment		School Communicatrion		School Involvement	

(Level 1) Personal Motivtion		Invitations			Life Context		
Parental Role Construction	Parental Efficaiy	General School	Specific School	Specific Child	Knowledge and Skills	Time and Energy	Family Culture

Figure 2. Psychological factors contributing to parent involvement

In 2005, the revised Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model represented psychological factors underlying parents' involvement behaviors and the process used during this development (Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997, 2005) explained the model is based on three imperative questions:

1. Why do parents choose to become involved?

2. How does their involvement, once engaged, influence student outcomes?

3. What student outcomes are associated with parent involvement efforts?

Although there are five levels to the model, Level 1 details specific motivations that lead parents to become involved in the educational process. Exploring what motivates a parent to become involved assists teachers in understanding why a parent may or may not engage in the educational process. When a better understanding exists, teachers develop better strategies and practices to support a higher level of parent involvement. The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model states parents become involved due to personal motivation, invitations to become involved, and life context (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

Parents' personal motivations derive from parental role construction and self-efficacy. Bandura's social cognitive theory, which is connected to a teacher's desire and capability to involve parents, can also be a key factor in a parent's desire and capabilities to become involved in the educational process. Parents' beliefs about child-rearing and social factors shape their views about their own participation in the educational process. This leads parents to take an active or passive role in their child's education (Stevenson, Chen, & Uttal, 1990). Hoover-Dempsey and Jones (1997) found two parts to role construction: active (personal behaviors to support child in school) or passive (school holds primary responsibility for child's education). Active parents are more likely to be involved in the family-school relationship, but this can

depend on the school context that promotes or hinders partnership. Parents experiencing active role construction and a high level of self-efficacy are more likely to take an active role in their child's education. A parent's high level of self-efficacy facilitates the belief that he or she makes a difference in their child's education. Environment, behavior, and personal factors shape self-efficacy.

As stated previously, self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one's capability to act in ways that will produce desired outcomes (Bandura, 1997). According to Bandura, these beliefs are shaped by environment, behavior, and personal factors. When a person believes his or her actions bring a desired outcome, he or she follows through with the actions to get the desired outcome. Therefore, based on Hoover-Dempsey et al. (1995) and Bandura (1989, 1997) a parent's desire to assist his or her child in the educational process is similar to that of a teacher's desire to involve parents. In addition, parents who have had positive outcomes with helping his or her child in school, received support for helping, observed positive outcomes by supporting his or her child in school, and/or received encouragement for assisting with school involvement tend to build self-efficacy and stay involved (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). A parent's personal motivation to become involved provides a rationale for involvement.

In addition to a parent's personal motivation to become involved, a parent's perception of invitations affects his or her overall desire to be involved. Invitations can be general, school-specific or child-specific. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) state the most influential others in parents' decisions about involvement are the school, the child's teachers, and the child. For example, a general invitation would be an administrator's invitation to the entire school population to attend a fundraising event. A more specific invitation could be inviting a parent to attend a parent-teacher conference. A child asking for assistance with homework is also an

invitation to become involved. The development of a positive school climate allows for these invitations to occur frequently. Although parents desire to support his or her child, the teacher and administrator must provide opportunities for parents to become involved. Teachers play a role in educating the child to ask for a parent to support him or her at home. However, even with clear invitations to become involved, parents have factors leading them to be hesitant to get involved.

There are variables within the life context of a parent that can affect parent involvement. Walker et al. (2005) described that one variable identified is a parent's own knowledge and skill level. Parents who are less educated may find it more difficult to assist a child with homework or communicate effectively with teachers (Lareau, 1989). Time and energy spent working is another variable that can affect parent involvement. The more a parent works, the less time he or she has to become involved at school or assist at home. However, Smock and McCormick (1995) found that employment status is not significantly related to involvement. A third variable within the context of a parent's life that can affect parent involvement is family culture. Culture can shape beliefs about parent involvement. While some cultures may suggest parents stay on the sidelines, other cultures believe parents should have direct engagement with their children at home, teachers, and school activities and events (The Parent Institute, 2012).

This review of the Hoover-Dempsey Sandler model focuses only on Level 1, because it is imperative to understand the motivation of parents to become involved in order to develop solid questions used for research regarding perceptions of parent involvement. The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model has been used in the field of education to determine parents' involvement decisions.

Anderson and Minke (2007) developed a survey based on the Hoover-Dempsey Sandler model and hypothesized, "the relationship between parent's role construction and sense of efficacy and their own involvement behaviors would be mediated by their perceptions of time and energy demands and invitations from specific teachers" (p. 314). In other words, characteristics in Level I of the model, personal motivation, invitation, and life context, should directly affect parental decisions to become involved.

Elementary minority parents from a Southwest urban district were given the survey developed by Anderson and Minke (2007). Results showed that role construction was positively related to parents' involvement behaviors. However, role construction was reported to be high, which make it difficult to analyze the data. A range in role construction beliefs would allow for a more thorough analysis. Parents' sense of self-efficacy showed a limited direct effect on them becoming involved. However, self-efficacy was linked to parent's involvement at home. Parents who felt good about helping their child at home and noted results continued to support his or her child at home.

The most notable findings were in the areas of resources (e.g., time and energy) and specific invitations. Anderson and Minke (2007) found that "specific teacher invitations had the strongest relationship with parents' involvement behaviors and were associated relatively equally with the three PI variables (home, events at school, and ongoing involvement at school) across home and school" (p. 319). Parents reported that resources (e.g., time, transportation, and child care) did not affect their overall involvement. In reference to Bandura's social cognitive theory, teachers with a high level of self-efficacy are likely the ones who are inviting parents. The parents accepting invitations are most likely parents with high levels of self-efficacy.

Limitations to this study were that participants were of lower income, attended an urban school, and were mostly African-American. This does not allow for the study to be generalizable. However, minority parents are often underrepresented, so this study brought new analysis of parent involvement. The data were based on self-reports and cannot be confirmed via other sources. It should be noted that parents who do not get involved are most likely not completing the survey. Therefore, involved parents' answers may be significantly different than those of uninvolved parents.

Parents' decision to get involved is important to students' academic success; however, research on this topic is limited. Teachers' specific invitations to parents play a significant role in the involvement process. Little information is known about parent perceptions regarding the types of communication used to initiate involvement (Anderson & Minke, 2007). In addition, the need for data collection from uninvolved parents is significant as this sampling is likely untapped. The data clearly show that there are implications for school leaders. Teachers' efforts to involve parents are critical. Creating initiatives to support teachers to feel comfortable inviting parents to become involved will benefit students and the home-school relationship.

Anderson and Minke (2007) studied parents of elementary school aged students. The results could be very different if this study were conducted or repeated at a secondary level. It becomes more difficult to obtain results for secondary level parents, because research indicates there is a drop-off of parent involvement at the secondary level (Borough & Irvin, 2001; Dauber & Epstein, 1989).

2.2.2 The Reactive Hypothesis and Parent Involvement Findings

The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model identifies parents' decision making when getting involved in their children's education. Bandura's social cognitive theory links behavior, personal factors, and environment to learning and emphasizes that learning takes place through observation in a social context. Another framework, the reactive hypothesis theory, posits that parents are prompted to become involved in their child's education when they observe behaviors that are not positive and lower levels of academic achievement are noted (McNeal, 2012).

Up until this point, parent involvement has been linked to positive student outcomes, but not all parent involvement brings desired student outcomes. Furthermore, student achievement does not always increase when parents are involved. Other factors in a student's life may contribute to student achievement more than parent involvement. Teachman (1987) found that resources at home and the home environment itself contribute to a student's higher level of academic achievement. Identifying that there are various factors that can lead to student achievement (other than parent involvement) presents an opportunity to examine if parent involvement is always a key component to student achievement. Further investigation can determine if parent involvement is always positive. For instance, one theoretical framework for parent involvement, the reactive hypothesis, indicates that parent involvement can be negative. However, it is unclear if the negative involvement truly improves or hinders academic achievement or only facilitates negative behaviors.

When one experiences something he or she does not like, he or she most likely reacts in a manner to better the situation. Parents react to their child's behaviors in the same reactive manner at times. Bandura's social cognitive theory posits that when parents note observable behaviors they react or learn what to do based on environment, personal factors, and (previous)

behaviors. For example, a parent's reaction to low achievement (which is observable through grades) can create an emotional reaction prompting him or her to become involved in their child's education. The reactive behavior by the parent to improve academic achievement may ultimately result in the child changing behavior, but the change in behavior may not be positive. McNeal (1999) contended that in his study, parent involvement should primarily affect behavioral outcomes not academic achievement outcomes, and these findings should be contingent on students' social class, race, and gender. Parents noting their child's academic achievement is low may become involved as a reactive behavior to support their child, especially given the correlation between low achievement and behavioral issues. This reactive behavior may not produce improved academic achievement and may have a negative impact on student behavior.

Epstein (1988) found that when students need assistance, especially in math and science, parent involvement can result in a negative relationship between homework and student achievement. Sudden support from the parent can create tension for the parent-child relationship. Becoming involved reactively and not proactively is not necessarily beneficial to raising student achievement. Rather, parents who consistently stay involved most likely will not experience this type of negative interaction while offering support.

To further study the reactive hypothesis, McNeal (2012) used previously collected data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study, NELS (Department of Education, 1988). This longitudinal data allowed for parent involvement analysis for grades 8, 10, and 12. The study allowed McNeal to look at several parent involvement behaviors, parent child discussion, monitoring, and educational support practices, to identify how these types of involvement affect students over time. McNeal focused on how these three parent involvement behaviors impacted

student performance and behaviors, specifically science achievement and truancy.   McNeal's findings did not support the reactive hypothesis since no negative correlation or relationship between parent involvement and academic achievement was present. In fact, students who were poorly performing in school or being truant were more likely to have parents who were less likely to become involved due to these behaviors. McNeal (2012) writes:

> For the reactive hypothesis to be valid there needs to be a positive relationship between truancy and parent involvement. In other words, increased levels of truancy would have to be associated with increased levels of educational support practices. Just the opposite is true: The analysis found that there was a negative relationship between Grade 8 truancy and Grade 10 educational support practice. In other words, higher truancy was associated with lower levels of parental support. (p. 87)

Although McNeal's (2012) findings did not support the reactive hypothesis, he does identify that certain types of parent involvement can have negative impacts on student achievement. However, it is more likely parents who get involved and see negative academic achievement do so because the child's behaviors changed, thus affecting academic success. Furthermore, parents of adolescents need to approach parent involvement differently than parents of younger children.   McNeal states, "It may be that most of what is known about parent involvement was developed after studying younger children, and these forms of involvement are less likely effective, and quite damaging for adolescents" (2012, p.88). Also, McNeal acknowledges that teenagers are less likely to embrace parent involvement, and therefore parents engage less in school.

Domina (2005) conducted a study using data from The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1979), and found both positive and negative aspects of parent involvement at the

elementary level. Attending Parent Teacher Association meetings (PTA), helping with homework, and volunteering in the school were positively associated with scores on academic tests, but, once background and prior academic achievement were controlled, the effect was negative or non-significant (Domina, 2005). It was also found that parent involvement activities do not always increase a child's learning, but likely will prevent behavior issues. Similar to McNeal (2012), Domina concluded parents who were involved in their child's schooling most likely encouraged positive behavior outcomes rather than academic success.

Parent involvement does not necessarily encourage learning, but it does prevent misbehavior. However, the positive behavior can improve attitude and learning at school which ultimately can lead to cognitive advantages. Domina (2005) stated, "The behavioral improvements that are associated with parental involvement may translate into cognitive advantages in the long run. As students progress through school their attitudes and behavior can have important implications for their future academic success (p. 264). Domina presents a different perspective about parent involvement reiterating academic success may occur due to a change in a child's behavior vs. a change in learning.

2.2.3 Epstein's Typology

McNeal's (2012) claim reminds us that much of the research is geared toward parent involvement during the elementary years. Elementary students naturally need more support due to age and correlating development. The natural setting in elementary schools allows for more parent involvement in plays, parties, field trips, and fund-raising, which are usually volunteer activities. However, there is much more to parent involvement than just volunteering. Joyce Epstein is one of the leading researchers in parent involvement. Epstein's (1995) parent

involvement model details how the spheres of influence and six parenting categories affect involvement. Figure 3 depicts how school, family, and community all influence the outcome of a child.
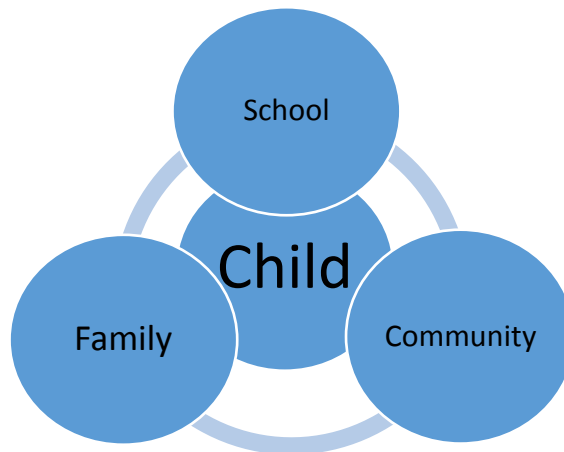
Figure 3. School, family, community creating overlapping spheres of influence

In essence, family, community, and school are integral parts of the support system for students. Epstein labels this model the spheres of influence. The benefit of these three spheres overlapping impacts students. High-quality communication between all spheres "gives a consistent message to students regarding the importance of school and helps youngsters succeed in school and later in life" (Epstein, 1995, p.82).

Because the term, parent involvement, is broad, it can be challenging to clearly define what activities fall into the realm of parent involvement. Volunteering is one way parents get involved. However, other activities such as assisting with homework or studying can also be a way for parents to get involved. Parent involvement does not just occur at school; involvement can take place at home. A partnership between home and school is best when supporting a child. Support is also best when extended in to the community. Epstein's spheres of influence are valuable, because they give a more definitive way collaboration can be done in a successful partnership. In addition, there are internal and external components to this model. Epstein (1995)

explained that the external model allows for some school, family, and community practices to be conducted separately and some to be conducted together. All of these practices support a student's learning. "The internal model, which is an interaction among the spheres, shows the complexity and essential interpersonal relations and patterns of influence that occur between school, family and the community" (Epstein, 1995, p.82). It must be noted the student is always in the center as he or she plays the most important role in the educational process. Desandles (2001) describes Epstein's model as a reciprocal relationship among teachers, families, and students in which the students are active agents in the school-family relationship.

Characteristics indicative of the overlapping spheres of influence are seen throughout a school. The characteristics are experienced daily and schools are "family friendly," which means they take into account the realities of family life such as working parents (Epstein, 1995). In order for school, parent, and communities to work together schools will have programs in place to create practices that meet the individual needs of the entire school community. Because programs are developed based on the needs of the school community, these programs can look different from site to site. Parent involvement can occur in various ways. To better define parent involvement, Epstein (1995) also created a framework of six major types of parent involvement that allow students at the elementary, middle, and high school level to be successful because school, family, and community work together. This framework advocates for teachers and schools to involve parents. Schools may determine to emphasize one type of involvement more than another based on the desired practices of the teachers and the culture of the school.

Table 1 details each of Epstein's parenting categories and indicates the types of practices that fall into each category as defined by Parent Education Bridge for Student Achievement Foundation (2012).

Table 1. Description of Epstein's typology

Categories	Exemplary Practices
Parenting	• Assist with parenting and child rearing skills • Assist with understanding child development • Set home conditions that support children at various stages • Assist school with understanding families
Communicating	• Communicate with families about school programs and student progress through effective school-home and home-school communication
Volunteering	• Consider recruitment methods, parent's work schedules, and training to include families as volunteers • Involve families in the audiences to support students and school programs
Learning at Home	• Involve families in the learning process at home • Develop homework, extension into curriculum and activities that include parents
Decision Making	• Include parents in the governance of the school • Promote advocacy and participation on committees, teams, and parent organizations
Collaborating with Community	• Coordinate community resources to support families • Provide service to families through local agencies and businesses

Through the use of Epstein's typology model, researchers can determine parent involvement in schools and determine strengths and areas to improve. Benefits such as increased student achievement, fewer behavior issues, and less truancy are experienced within the school community. Ingram, Wolfe, and Lieberman (2007) used Epstein's typologies to investigate elements of parent involvement and children's academic achievement at the elementary level. Epstein's typology measured the types of involvement prevalent at high achieving, low socio-economic schools. Results indicated parents most often participated in two of the six categories, parenting and learning, at home. Further investigation found barriers to the remaining four types of parent involvement. For example, barriers to volunteering included working parents'

schedules, the inability to contribute to fundraising, or language barriers. Lack of participation in the decision-making process can be due to a parent's belief that he or she is less educated than teachers and has little to no knowledge to contribute. A parent's belief that he or she is unable to contribute to the decision-making process directly relates back to Badura's social cognitive theory. When parents lack self-efficacy, they are less likely to participate in their child's education. Strengthening activities within the parenting and learning at home categories may directly impact student achievement in a positive manner. However, teachers should also begin to understand the culture of the school community to enhance parent involvement in the remaining four typologies.

Additionally, Barge and Loges (2003) used the framework to determine if parent, student, and teachers' perceptions of parent involvement were similar. This study was done at the middle level. Although all groups believed parent involvement was important to a student's academic success, people within the group viewed involvement differently. Parents believed extended communication into the community (support agencies, extracurricular activities, and community organizations) was important to support students. Teachers and students believed communication directly with the student was most important and rarely mentioned the need for parents to extend communication into the community in order to help support his or her child. Developing programs to close the gap between parent, teacher, and student perceptions of parent involvement will enhance the school community.

Research indicates parent involvement in the educational process is important to a child's success. Researchers (Domina, 2012; Epstein, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; and McNeal, 2012) have found that parent involvement can positively impact a student and the school community. It is acknowledged in the literature that not all parent involvement is positive

and may change behaviors rather than cognitive ability; however, due to the overwhelmingly positive benefits to students, it is difficult to imagine why a parent may not become involved. In order for teachers to facilitate parent involvement he or she must understand the perceptions of parents. Once there is a better understanding of why parents may not get involved, teachers can work to overcome these barriers and address the needs of a diverse population of parents.

2.3   WHAT DOES RESEARCH SAY ABOUT PARENTS NOT GETTING INVOLVED?

Research indicates the importance of parent involvement. Whether a child is in kindergarten or a senior in high school on the verge of stepping out into the world, parent involvement has affected a child's individual success or lack of success. People think back to their own life experiences and can reflect on a teacher who made a positive difference in his or her education. Instead of asking how a teacher affected one's education, it would be of interest to ask individuals to reflect on how his or her parents affected their education. Research indicates attendance, academic achievement, behavior, attitude, and mental health of children improve when parents are involved in the educational process (Comer & Hayes, 1991; Epstein, 2008, Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).   Parent involvement is an integral part of the educational process. The provocative question then becomes, "Why aren't some parents involved?"

We cannot assume parents are not involved because they are lazy or uncaring. Therefore, it is important to review research to fully understand multiple reasons why parents may not get involved their child's education.

2.3.1 Language Barriers for Minority and Immigrant Parents

Educational research has been done to understand the many barriers minority parents experience. One poignant trend found in much of the research regarding minority parents and parent involvement is that parents want to be involved but feel unwelcomed, alienated, isolated, or have personal constraints (Matuszny, Devender, & Coleman, 2007; Trotman, 2001). Educators may have difficulty identifying the feelings parents experience, because they may not be apparently observable. A teacher knows when a parent is not involved, but they may not know a parent feels isolated or alienated. One barrier many minority and immigrant parents encounter is a language barrier.

Even though language is an identifiable barrier to parental involvement, there is often little done to support non-English speaking or ESL parents. Regardless of the first language spoken by a parent, deciphering through the school system can be difficult. Ji and Koblinsky (2009) studied Chinese immigrant families and found that 76% of parents identified language as the biggest barrier. For example, parents desired involvement in parent-teacher conferences, but unless an interpreter was available parents understood little to nothing verbalized. In addition, parents indicated they reviewed their child's grades, but because of the language barrier were unable to understand what the report card meant (Ji & Koblinksy, 2009, p. 697). Chinese parents also struggled with supplying school resources, because they could not translate English to Chinese to understand what needed to be purchased for school. This study shows that teachers may believe parents do not want to be involved in their child's education when, in actuality, the desire may be strong but a language barrier prevents them from doing so. Turney and Kao (2009) found immigrants' English language ability directly affected parent involvement. Immigrants, usually white (e.g., those from Canada, Australia, United Kingdom, and Ireland), gained English

fluency easier than Asian and Hispanic immigrants. As white immigrant parents gained English fluency, they were found to interact more easily with teachers than Hispanic and Asian parents.

Even when school personnel make great strides in trying to provide parent involvement programs to mitigate language barriers, parents may still experience language barriers that keep them away from becoming involved in school. Pena (2000) studied the involvement of Mexican American parents in a biliterate/bilingual elementary school located in Texas. Classes, programs, assemblies, and hall displays reflected both English and Spanish languages. School administrators hoped the dual language program would eliminate language barriers, but researchers found that parents still experienced feelings of alienation.

Penna (2000) discovered that despite best efforts from the school, many of the parent meetings including Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) and Campus Advisory Council (CAC) meetings were conducted in the English. Pockets of information were given in Spanish, but overall Spanish-speaking parents felt left out. Spanish speaking parents' attendance declined because they could not actively participate. This created a separation among parents, and even more interesting, parents who were bilingual seemed caught in the middle. Since they understood both languages, they too felt isolated because they were viewed by some non-bilingual parents as having an advantage. One bilingual parent explained:

> Almost all the people around here are pure Spanish. I myself feel uncomfortable because of the surroundings at times. It's like I say, bilingual, being Spanish, it tends to add that extra factor where your kinda nervous participating, like a language barrier." (Penna, 2000, p. 47)

This bilingual parent, fully able to participate, brings to light a completely different perception of a language barrier.

Language barriers can persist even after parents have lived in the United States for many years, and even when parents can speak advanced English. Sohn and Wang (2006) investigated Korean mothers' views on involvement in American schools, grades preschool through fourth. Some mothers stated they had advanced English skills but still found communication skills with teachers difficult. They felt teachers did not understand their English and became frustrated talking with them. American educational terminology was not understood because some words were not easily translatable. One mother stated, "I don't know educational terms in English. I don't know English words like curriculum, substitute teacher, and time-out. So when I need to use these educational terms, I feel stuck" (Sohn & Wang, 2006, p. 128). Sohn and Wang found that English education in Korea focuses on grammar, not speaking. Therefore, even after studying English for ten years (the average requirement in Korea) many Koreans are still not fluent English speakers.

Parents want to be involved, but it becomes clear that language barriers inhibit them from actively engaging in meetings, attending conferences with teachers, and understanding educational terminology. Even in bilingual schools, parents still felt disconnected.

2.3.2   Barriers

Discussed thus far was one barrier parents face in becoming involved in their children's education, the language barrier. Parents who speak fluent English may also experience other barriers that significantly affect their ability to actively participate in his or her child's education. Several barriers repeated throughout literature are listed in Table 2. Parents from various ethnicities, ages, classes, and races experience some of the same barriers. Each barrier is summarized for clarity.

Table 2. Identified barriers and supporting research

Identified Barrier	Author
Job Responsibilities/Employment	Brandon (2007), Ji and Koblinski (2009), Trotman (2002), William and Sanchez (2011)
Family Structure	Pena (2000), Trotman (2002)
Education Level/Lack of Awareness	Epstein (1995), Griffin and Galassi (2010), Hornby and Lafaele (2011), Trotman (2002), Williams and Sanchez (2012)
School Support/Invitations	Epstein (2008), Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997)
Socioeconomics	Lareau, (1987), McNeal (2001), Stacer and Perrucci (2012)

One significant barrier is time. Educators work traditional daylight hours, while parents may work split shifts or evening hours. The differences in work hours can make it challenging for parents to attend evening conferences or events. William and Sanchez (2011) referred to this as "time poverty," (p. 9). which refers to the activities at home or away from school that consume parents' time. Employment was the activity that most parents described as keeping them away from school involvement. One parent reported

> When they have their teacher's meetings or when parents can come up to the school, it is always during the day. Well I work in the daytime so it's not like I don't want to partake, I just can't miss work. (William & Sanchez, 2011, p.11)

It becomes clear that parents want to be part of the education process but are unable to do so because of work. Stacer and Perrucci (2012) analyzed survey results from the Parent and Family Involvement Survey done in 2002-2003. They looked at results from White, Latino, and Black

parents regarding parent involvement in school, home and in the community. Across all three groups, time-related resources or hours worked negatively affected parent involvement.

Stacer and Perrucci (2012) also found the structure of a family can affect parent involvement. One example is single parenting. There are many challenges facing a single parent like time, resources, and work schedule that affect the ability to be involved. However, a different perspective of parents was childcare, even in two parent homes. Pena (2000) found even when a two-parent family structure existed mothers with multiple children could not attend school functions because of the lack of daycare. Teachers in the study were not open to the idea of bringing multiple children to meetings or events; therefore, mothers did not attend.

A third barrier is parents' level of education. Parents who indicated lower levels of education were often the least vocal to voice concerns, had less ability to support their children academically, and were the most hesitant to speak with staff (Epstein, 1995; Griffin & Galassi, 2010, Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Trotman, 2002; Williams, & Sanchez, 2012).

When parents feel supported within the school, barriers break down. The review of parent involvement models developed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) and Epstein (2008) (detailed in Section 2.2) clearly indicates that communication from schools as well as direct invitations from schools and teachers assist in parents feeling welcomed and supported to become involved in their child's education. Epstein's framework also indicates that involving parents at all six levels contributes to a higher level of success for children.

The socioeconomic level of a parent also is a barrier to involvement at school. As the economic level of a parent or guardian increases, so does the level of resources available. McNeal (2001) found, overall, students with lower socioeconomic status benefited less from any type of parent involvement (e.g., parent-child discussion, monitoring, PTO involvement) than

those of idle class standing. Socioeconomic status was found to impact parent involvement in school, at home, and within the community. Parents with a higher socioeconomic status were more involved (Stacer & Perrucci, 2012). Lareau (1987) studied White, working class and middle class family-school relationships of first graders and found families with higher occupational status had more disposable income, which made it easier to be involved in school. The disposable income allowed middle class mothers two cars, and money for babysitters and housecleaners, which provide more free time and resources for mothers to be involved.

The aforementioned barriers for parents are definitive reasons for the lack of parent involvement. The lack of parent involvement should in no way be misinterpreted for a lack of caring about one's child. Teacher understanding of the barriers is an integral part of facilitating a child's success.

This literature reviewed in this chapter details the importance of parent involvement in school and highlights the positive benefits children reap from parental involvement. Teachers' self-efficacy and personal beliefs influence how parents can be involved. After stating the positive benefits of parent involvement, several models and frameworks for parent involvement were reviewed in order to better understand what drives parent involvement. Barriers to parent involvement were reviewed to better understand why parents might not be involved in the educational process even when desiring to be involved. Educators desire to positively affect students' lives and help them be the best person possible. No matter how much time, energy, effort, and passion a teacher puts forth, he or she will most likely never influence a student the way an involved parent can throughout the educational process. After exploring barriers and opportunities parents face in school systems, Mannan and Blackwell (1992) captured the overall importance of parents:

To compensate for the parental lack of time to socialize and help educate children, schools have tried to become everything. Society has demanded and is demanding more and more of the school, and in this effort, schools are failing. Schools *cannot* replace parents, and schools should not replace parents. (p. 222)

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Regardless of a principal's training and years of experience, each principal brings with them personal and professional beliefs about parent involvement. Bandura's (1989, 1997) social cognitive theory states a person's personal factors, environment, and behavior influence human functioning and learning. Applying this theory to school leadership would indicate that administrators possess different levels of comfort with parent involvement based on their own life experiences.

Principals are responsible for facilitating parent involvement within a school. The structure of the public school setting requires basic parent involvement activities such as conferences, open house, chaperoning, and fundraising events. Research indicates parental involvement in the educational process directly relates to children's improved attendance, academic achievement, behavior, attitude, and overall mental health (Comer & Hayes, 1991; Epstein, 2008; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Research also indicates parent involvement decreases at the secondary level (Constantino, 2007; Thornburg, 1981). Many traditional volunteer opportunities are no longer age appropriate at the middle and high school levels.

Epstein's typology highlights six categories, with specific practices in each category, to involve parents: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and

collaborating with community.   Epstein and other researchers, both nationwide and internationally, have used the above typology or a hybrid for data collection to determine parent involvement at the elementary level most often by surveying students, parents, and/or teachers (Bhering, 2002; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Ibrahim, Jamil, & Abdullah, 2012; Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman, 2007; Kim & Steyn, 2013). A review of the literature found the use of Epstein's typology at the middle level is limited. Even more limited is the use of the typology with principals at the middle level. Figure 4 explains the purpose of this study.

Review of Literature	Gap	Purpose of Study
• Prevalent at elemenatry level • Students, parents, and teachers part of study	• Studies using Epstein's Typlogy limited at middle level • Use with principals is limited	• Use Epstein's typology with middle level principals to determine various levels of parent invovlement
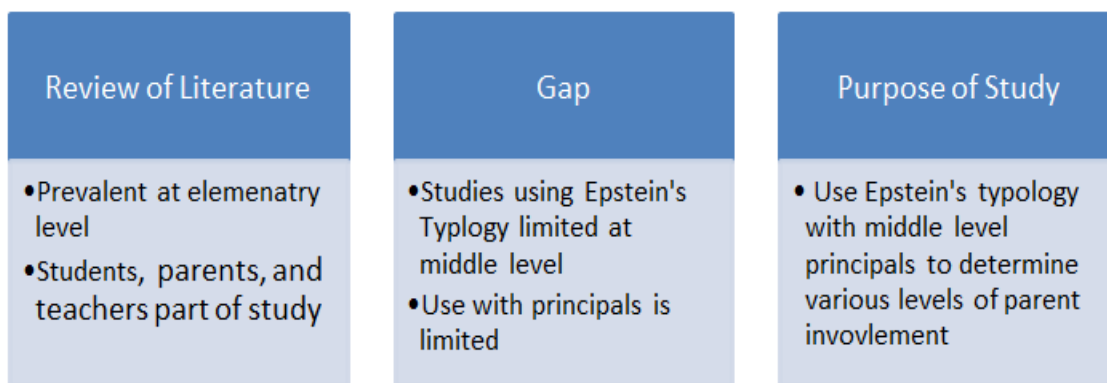
Figure 4. Purpose of the study

This study addresses the gap in research by studying middle school principals' practices of parent involvement based on Epstein's typology. This chapter discusses the statement of the problem, research questions, theoretical framework, research design, and the procedures used for data analysis.

3.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Students do better when their parents are involved in the educational process. Parent involvement is more prevalent at the elementary level because involvement opportunities are numerous. As students enter middle school and high school parent involvement occurs less. Parent involvement becomes more strategic and needs planned out at the secondary level because classroom parties, field trips and guest readers are no longer age appropriate. These types of involvement opportunities which are typical at the elementary level rarely exist at the secondary level. Adolescents are becoming more independent and this also affects a parents' ability to assist with work at home. In addition, teachers do not always involve parents because of their own personal beliefs, self-efficacy, confidence, and personal experiences. Parents do not always feel welcomed into schools, language barriers prevent involvement, and psychological factors can keep parents from becoming involved in school (Hoover-Dempsey, Sandler, & Walker, 2005; Matuszny, Devender, & Coleman, 2007; Trotman, 2001).

A principal must be able to facilitate parent involvement. Studies on middle level principals' practices of parent involvement are lacking, and it is important to know what practices are currently be used at the middle level. This study will look to close the gap by studying principals' practices of parent involvement at the middle level by using Epstein's typology. Middle level principals will better understand best practices for involving parents.

3.3   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To explore the gap in the literature and the problem described in the previous section, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. To what extent do middle level principals' parent involvement practices compare to Epstein's exemplary *practices* in the typology?

2. To what extent do middle level principals' parent involvement practices align to Epsteins's six parent involvement *categories*: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with community?

3. How do middle level principals parent involvement practices vary by years of experience, years leading at current school, gender, percentage of free and/or reduced meals within the school student population, and the geographical location of the school?

3.4   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study used a quantitative survey to collect data. The survey used in this study is reflective in nature and requires middle level principals to make meaning of their own experiences as well as their own self-efficacy; therefore, constructivist epistemology shaped this study. Mertens and Wilson (2012) explained a constructivist views reality through reflection and upon experiences and interactions with others. The answers given by principals required them to reflect on their own personal experiences. Although constructivism is traditionally not associated with quantitative research, quantitative methods can be appropriate (Lincoln, 2010).

The survey used in this study, Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnership (Epstein et al., 2002) is based on Epstein's typology for parent involvement which served as the framework for this study. Epstein granted the researcher permission to modify the Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnership survey to collect data based on current practices, specifically the use of technology. Parent involvement practices assist in bringing together or separating schools, family, and community in support of a child. Therefore, studying middle level principals' practices of parent involvement can assist in building a strong school community, which leads to student success.

Epstein (2011) framed her typologies from three perspectives of practitioners regarding family and school relations:

1. *Separate responsibilities* of family and schools assume there is incompatibility, competition, and conflict between families (teachers and parents).

2. *Shared responsibilities* of families and school emphasize the coordination and cooperation of teachers and parents and encourage communication and collaboration.

3. *Sequential responsibilities* of families and school emphasize the contributions parents and teachers play in the critical stages of child development.

Epstein (2011) explained there are also mechanisms for building family and school relations and "these mechanisms serve as motivation to remove or reinforce boundaries between schools and families" (p. 27).

Partnerships between home and school have changed over time. The church and community once controlled hiring of teachers and development of curriculum. Now, the hiring of teachers is done by professional staff within a school system and states mandate curriculum. Trends like working mothers, childcare at an earlier age, federal regulations, and changing

family structures have also contributed to changes in the home and school relationship (Epstein, 2011). Epstein's model depicted in Figure 5 (also Figure 3) visually represents school and family relations' ability to thrive regardless of ongoing changes. The spheres indicate that parent involvement can increase due to practices of teachers, administrators, students, and parents. School and family actions or interactions can include or exclude parent involvement.
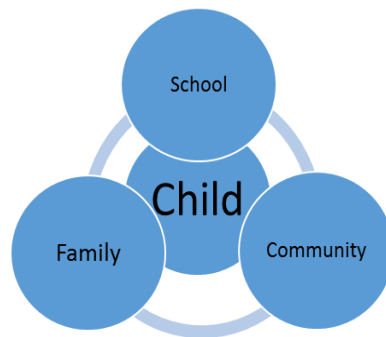
Figure 5. School, family, community creating overlapping spheres of influence

Epstein (2011) wrote, "The theory of overlapping spheres of influence posits that students learn more when parents, educators, and others in the community work together to guide and support student learning and development" (p. 43). This theory created the opportunity for researchers to think in new ways about family and community involvement in the educational process. To further detail how family, school, and community can be involved together to support a child, Epstein created a framework that included six types of parent involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community (Epstein, 1995, 2001). This research study utilized Epstein's framework to determine middle level principals' practices of parent involvement.

3.5   RESEARCH DESIGN

This research study is quantitative in design. Many of the studies focusing on parent involvement in the literature were conducted using parent and/or teacher samples; few had principals as respondents. Therefore, this study focused on middle level principals' practices of parent involvement. Babbie (2013) stated that surveys can be used for descriptive, explanatory, or exploratory purposes. This study is exploratory in nature due to the lack of existing research on this topic. The population being surveyed, middle school principals, would be too large to observe individually. In addition, middle school principals' practices of parent involvement may be difficult to observe, and it would be costly to travel to various regions in Pennsylvania to observe multiple middle level principals. Therefore, conducting a survey allowed the researcher to collect original data from a large population that otherwise could be difficult to observe (Babbie, 2013).

3.5.1   Survey Design

The determination to use an existing survey was partly based on a pilot study that was conducted in 2013. After getting permission from two school districts in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, parent and teacher data were collected as part of the pilot study. Questions about parent involvement were given to teachers and parents based on Epstein's typology. The data collected allowed the researcher to determine the quality of the questions in order to revise the survey as needed. Respondents did not answer questions regarding involvement practices. Teachers and parents were asked to review questions and determine clarity. Participant feedback indicated they

understood Epstein's typology and could relate to the six categories of involvement. This pilot could have led to the development of a survey to administer to parents and/or teachers.

However, after conducting a thorough literature review, the importance of parent involvement became clear. The decrease of parent involvement at the secondary level was also evident. It also became apparent that parents and teachers were often studied. Findings also indicated teachers were not always aware of appropriate ways to involve parents into the educational process, especially at the secondary level. In addition, principals were identified as key people to assist in involving parents into the educational process, but studies of practices of parent involvement by secondary principals were lacking. Having great interest in middle level education and experience as a middle level teacher and administrator, the researcher focused on studying principals' parent involvement practices at the middle level. Since there are various types of parent involvement, especially depending on the socio-economics, size, location, and grade configuration of the school, it was determined that Epstein's typology and survey was a reliable way to collect data.

An existing survey, Measure of School Family and Community Partnership (Epstein et al., 2002), was developed to measure how a school is reaching out to involve parents (Appendix B). Permission was granted by the developers of this survey to the research to use or adapt this survey to meet the needs of the current study (Appendix A). Survey questions were adapted in order to pose the survey to middle level principals rather than the original participants, who were most often parents and/or teachers. The matrix indicates use of questions from the original survey (Appendix C). It also provides reason as to why some questions were not used or adapted. Some of the questions from the original survey were omitted or adapted for several reasons including eliminating redundancy, allowing participants to complete the survey in a timely

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manner, addressing current trends in education such as use of technology and websites, and considering participants would be middle school principals. Epstein's research and typology frames the survey questions and is noted in the matrix, but additional research is noted when adapting questions. The final survey collected middle level principals' practices of parent involvement in a concise manner while addressing current educational practice (Appendix D).

A second pilot study of the proposed survey was completed in November of 2016 which was two months before the final survey was administered. The survey was given to seven current or retired middle level assistant principals in order to determine effectiveness of the survey items. Assistant principals have a strong understanding of the questions asked in the survey but are not included in the sample. This feedback led to a few revisions including defining the multiple choice responses as well as making the boxes for open-ended responses in the demographic questions larger. The data collected in this pilot was appropriate and able to answer the research questions. These corrections were made before administering the final survey.

Qualtrics Survey System accessed through the University of Pittsburgh was used to administer the survey. Administering the survey in a web-based manner allowed for a large sample to be accessed quickly (Birnbaum, 2004). Babbie (2013) stated, in recent years online surveys appear to be comparable in response rates to that of mail surveys, and online surveys are cost effective.

3.5.2   Survey Sampling

The Pennsylvania Association for Middle Level Education (PAMLE) is an organization that was established in 1975 under the name of Western Pennsylvania League of Middle Schools. Several years later, the organization became affiliated with the National Middle School Association, and

the organization changed to Pennsylvania Middle School Association. The establishment of this organization promoted the general improvement of middle level education for students. Exploration within middle level education was promoted, and a forum for middle level educators was created allowing educators to discuss best practices. PAMLE focuses on educators working with students ages 10 to 15 and in grades 5–9 regardless of the grade configurations of the schools that house them. The current name, Pennsylvania Association for Middle Level Educators (PAMLE), reflects the ability to share best practices among teachers and principals (PAMLE, 2015).

In addition, PAMLE has embraced the work of Donald H. Eichhorn whose doctoral study provided evidence that youth between 10 and 15 years of age have unique physical characteristics. Eichhorn developed a framework for the middle school that is widely practiced. His work and model led to a prestigious award for middle schools, "Schools to Watch." Criteria for the award include the ability for a school community to address academic excellence, developmental responsiveness, social equity, and organizational structures and processes. Since 2006, 34 middle schools in Pennsylvania have been named Schools to Watch (PAMLE, 2015).

PAMLE encourages best practices at the middle level. This study aims to gather data about middle school principals' current parent involvement practices. Therefore, it seemed appropriate to ask for permission to survey members of PAMLE. Permission was granted by Leonard Ference, Executive Director of PAMLE (Appendix E). A list of members in the Western Region was provided in order to survey middle school principals who either have an individual or an institutional (through the district) membership. The Western Region of PAMLE includes the entire southwest corner of the state of Pennsylvania including Allegheny, Beaver,

Greene, and Washington counties, and also outer borders of Lawrence, Armstrong, Butler, Indiana, Westmoreland, and Fayette counties.

The list provided by PAMLE identified 34 active members who are current middle level principals. Because of the small sample the survey was expanded to all middle level principals working in the Western Region as identified by PAMLE who work in any 5 through 9 grade configuration and who work with students age ranges of 10-15. Principals leading a junior/senior high school or leading a school including grade 4 were not included. To gain a more robust sampling, middle level principals who work in a district who are members of Tri-State Area School Study Council were also included in the sampling. Tri-State Area School Study Council helps leaders stay focused on the rapidly changing administrative, legal, and instructional issues of K-12 education. Therefore, it is appropriate to include the expertise of middle level principals associated with this organization. Table 3 indicates the breakdown of middle school principals asked to be participants which totals 115. In addition, 18 of the schools identified in Table 3 have been named Schools to Watch since 2006. There were several school districts that span two counties. The middle school location determined the identified county.

Table 3. Middle schools in western region with middle school principals as participants

County	Number of Districts	Number of Middle Schools	PAMLE
Allegheny	42	39	19
Armstrong	8	3	0
Beaver	15	11	4
Butler	9	9	3
Fayette	8	8	0
Greene	5	2	1
Indiana	11	0	0
Lawrence	9	2	1
Washington	15	13	3
Westmoreland	19	20	3
Tri-State Area Study Council	N/A	8	0
Total	141	115	34

Of the 115 participants invited to complete the survey, 55 responded to the survey which was 48.7% (n=55). There were 43 male and 12 female middle school principals who completed the survey.

3.5.3 Data Collection

Members of the Pennsylvania Association for Middle Level Educators (PAMLE) in the Western Region, middle level principals who lead a school in the Western Region and middle level principals who work in a district who have membership to the Tri-State Area School Study Council received an introduction letter via email inviting them to take part in the survey and stating PAMLE is in support of the research study. The letter initiated a full understanding of the study, assured confidentiality to respondents, detailed the time commitment, and provided a link to the survey (Appendix G). Mertens (2010) recommended sending a follow-up letter (email) to ensure a high response rate (Appendix H). A three week window was allotted for completion of the survey. A follow-up email was sent after the first, second, and third week.

3.6   DATA ANALYSIS

Research data for this study was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Stata 14 software available through the University of Pittsburgh was used to examine the data collected. Descriptive statistics, specifically the measures of central tendency (mean, median, and standard deviation), is best used to describe characteristics of a sample or the relationship between variable samples (Babbie, 2013). Inferential statistics allow for inferences to be made from

findings based on sample observations for a larger population (Babbie, 2013). Specifically, t-Tests and Pearson's r Correlation will be used to make inferences from the collected data.

The data collected were analyzed by examining overall responses per research question. Each question represents a practice with a parenting category. The survey format identifies the questions respondents are answering per each parenting category. A breakdown of data analysis per parenting category is provided in Table 4.

Table 4. Data analysis

Research Question	Survey Item	Analysis
1. To what extent do middle level principals' parent involvement practices compare to Epstein's exemplary practices in the typology?	Items analyzed in independently to get the mean average 3-7 (Parenting) 8-14 (Communicating) 15-19 (Volunteering) 20-24 (Learn at Home) 25-29 (Decision Making) 30-34 (Collaborate with Community)	Descriptive Statistics • Mean • Median • Standard Deviation • Frequency Each question within the typology will be summarized in table format to compare distribution and measure of central tendency per individual question. This allows for more in-depth understandings of how individual practices contribute to overall involvement.
2. To what extent do middle level principals' parent involvement practices align to Epstein's six parent involvement categories: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with community?	Items analyzed by practices in typology 3-7 (Parenting) 8-14 (Communicating) 15-19 (Volunteering) 20-24 (Learn at Home) 25-29 (Decision Making) 30-34 (Collaborate with Community)	Descriptive Statistics • Mean • Median • Standard Deviation • Frequency Data will be analyzed by taking the mean average from respondents' scores in each of the six parenting categories in order to calculate measure of central tendency. This allows for descriptive comparison of various practices among middle level principals' per each parenting category.
3. How do middle level principals' parent involvement practices vary by years of experience, years leading at current school, gender, percentage of free and/or reduced meals within the school student population, and the geographical location of the school?	Items analyzed 1 (Consent) 2 (Consent) 35 (Years of exp.) 36 (Current positon) 37 (Gender) 38 (Free and reduced lunch %) 39 (Geographical location of the school)	Inferential Statistics • T-test • Pearson's *r* Correlations Data will be analyzed to determine if respondents' scores significantly vary based on years of experience, years leading at current school, gender, free and/or reduced lunches, and the geographical location of the school. The data will be analyzed to determine determine relationships between the listed variables.

The data analysis addressed the research questions and determined practices regarding parent involvement at the middle level. This information can better assist middle level principals in developing involvement practices and/or strengthening current practices based on Epstein's typology.

4.0   FINDINGS

4.1   INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to gain insight about middle level principals' practices of parent involvement. The literature review indicated that attendance, academic achievement, behavior, attitude, and mental health of children improve when parents are involved in the educational process (Comer & Hayes, 1991; Epstein, 2008; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Much of the reviewed literature gave a perspective as to why parents may not get involved largely due to teacher practices. However, a principal's leadership influences the involvement of parents, because it is the school leader who successfully implements parent programs and provides a positive school climate that invites parents to become involved (Dornbusch & Ritter, 1988; Griffith 2001; Richardson, 2009). Therefore, this study attempted to address the gap in the literature by identifying middle level principals' practices of parent involvement. This chapter presents the study's findings.

Principals' practices of parent involvement vary greatly. In order to focus this study, Epstein's (1995) typology, which identifies six categories of parent involvement, was used. The six categories in Epstein's typology include: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. An existing survey, the Measure

of School Family and Community Partnership (Epstein et al., 2002), was adapted for this study and used with middle level principals.

An online survey was used to collect data on middle level principals' practices of parent involvement. This chapter is organized to provide context based on participants' responses to the three research questions:

1. To what extent do middle level principals' parent involvement practices compare to Epstein's exemplary *practices* in the typology?

2. To what extent do middle level principals' parent involvement practices align to Epsteins's six parent involvement *categories*: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with community?

3. How do middle level principals parent involvement practices vary by years of experience, years leading at current school, gender, percentage of free and/or reduced meals within the school student population, and the geographical location of the school?

4.2   PARTICIPANTS

Data were collected through an online survey, Qualtrics. The Pennsylvania Association for Middle Level Educators (PAMLE) supported this study, and middle level principals leading a school in the organization's Western Region were invited to respond to the survey. The Western Region includes the southwest corner of the state of Pennsylvania including Allegheny, Beaver, Greene, and Washington counties, and middle level principals in the outer borders of Lawrence, Armstrong, Butler, Indiana, Westmoreland, and Fayette counties were also asked to participate. Middle level principals who work in any 5 through 9 grade configuration and work with students

who range in age from 10-15 were included in the sample. Principals leading a junior/senior high school or leading a school including grade 4 were not included. To gain a more robust sampling, middle level principals who work in a district who are members of Tri-State Area School Study Council were also included in the sampling. Tri-State Area School Study Council helps leaders stay focused on the rapidly changing administrative, legal, and instructional issues of K-12 education. Therefore, it is highly appropriate to include the expertise of middle level principals associated with this organization. The total number of participants invited to take the survey was 115. There was a response rate of 48.7 % or 55 completed surveys.

4.3   ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Three research questions were posed to determine middle level principals' practices of parent involvement. Practices of parent involvement can vary greatly; therefore, the study focused on Epstein's (1995) typology, which includes six specific categories: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. Research questions one and two gathered data to determine how middle level principals' practices align to Epstein's typology. Responses indicated the individual practices in each category that were used and/or not used as well as the categories most often used by middle level principals to involve parents. Data were analyzed for research questions three to determine if gender, years of experience, years in a specific school, socio-economics, and the geographical location impacted parent involvement practices. The survey can be found in Appendix D.

4.3.1 Middle Level Participants' Responses

The first analysis focused on middle level principals' responses for each individual question (each question represents a practice), not including the demographic questions. There were 115 invited participants and 55 respondents. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the 55 responses. This analysis aimed to identify the overall individual responses indicating middle level principals' preferred practices to involve parents. Each question can be aligned to the final survey which is in Appendix D.

Table 5 on the next page indicates responses per individual question. The mean, median, standard deviation, and frequency for questions 3-34 are summarized. There were several substantial findings that emerged when the questions were analyzed individually. Since just looking at the mean does not indicate if the frequency of response correlated to the questions in a negative or positive manner, a breakdown of the descriptive statistics is discussed.

Table 5. Frequency of responses per individual survey question

Item	Not Occurring (1)	Rarely (2)	Occasionally (3)	Frequently (4)	Extensively (5)	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
Q3	7	14	26	8	0	3	2.63	0.89
Q4	6	14	25	10	0	3	2.70	0.90
Q5	1	5	29	17	3	3	3.29	0.79
Q6	2	16	27	10	0	3	2.81	0.77
Q7	1	8	14	24	8	4	3.54	0.98
Q8	1	8	20	20	6	3	3.4	0.93
Q9	0	1	1	9	44	5	4.74	0.58
Q10	11	4	8	10	22	4	3.50	1.56
Q11	0	3	2	5	45	5	4.67	0.79
Q12	0	0	3	21	31	5	4.50	0.60
Q13	0	7	21	19	8	3	3.50	0.90
Q14	5	4	6	18	22	4	3.87	1.27
Q15	23	14	13	3	2	2	2.03	1.10
Q16	3	3	12	17	20	4	3.87	1.13
Q17	10	12	18	9	6	3	2.80	1.23
Q18	2	5	16	23	9	4	3.58	0.99
Q19	8	13	18	9	7	3	2.89	1.22
Q20	2	8	20	19	5	3	3.31	0.97
Q21	2	13	17	20	3	3	3.16	0.98
Q22	6	13	21	11	4	3	2.89	1.08
Q23	4	12	23	12	4	3	3.00	1.01
Q24	6	19	21	8	1	3	2.61	0.93
Q25	14	5	4	8	24	4	3.41	1.69
Q26	5	9	20	13	8	3	3.18	1.15
Q27	4	10	14	14	13	3	3.40	1.24
Q28	0	0	2	17	36	5	4.61	0.56
Q29	25	9	11	6	4	2	2.18	1.32
Q30	5	3	13	20	14	4	3.63	1.19
Q31	2	2	26	16	9	3	3.50	.940
Q32	8	8	20	13	6	3	3.01	1.19
Q33	3	9	15	13	15	4	3.50	1.21
Q34	3	9	22	16	5	3	3.2	1.00

There were several findings that indicated practices "extensively" used by middle level principals to involve parents. Middle level principals responded they extensively conduct an orientation for new families including students and parents (Q11) 82% (n=45). Expecting teachers to return phone calls and emails to parents within 24 hours (Q8) was extensively practiced by 80% (n=44). Responses indicated that when working with parents, 65% of middle school principals extensively deal with conflict openly and respectfully (Q28) (n=36). Middle

level principals indicated they extensively empower teachers to provide information about curriculum, assessments, achievement levels, and grades to parents throughout the school year (Q12) 56% (n=31). Holding monthly PTA, PTO and other parent organization meetings (Q9) was practiced extensively 44% (n=24). Requiring teachers to hold formal conferences with parents (Q10) and mandating teachers to have up-to-date information on websites (Q14) was extensively practiced at 40% (n= 22).

Respecting diversity and culture of parents and students through school activities (Q7) was "frequently" practiced by 44% (n=24) of respondents. Scheduling school events at different times during the day and evening so all families can attend some throughout the year (Q18) was frequently practiced 42% (n=23). Middle level principals responded requiring teachers to assist parents with specific information about how to assist their child at home with student and/or organizational skills (Q21) was frequently practiced 36% (n=20). Similarly, principals indicated they frequently have a system in place to financially support families who may not be able to afford school sponsored field trips or after school activities (Q30) 36% (n=20).

Middle level principals' responses indicated several involvement practices that were "not occurring." Conducting surveys to identify interest, talents, and availability of parent volunteers in order to match their skills/talents with school and classroom needs (Q15) was not occurring according to 42% (n=23) of respondents. As per the responses, also not occurring by 45% of the principals (n=25) was the practice of principals asking involved parents to make contact with parents who are less involved to solicit their ideas and report back to them (Q29).

Analyzing responses to individual questions identified specific activities that were extensively practiced to involve parents. In contrast, the analysis also indicated some practices not occurring in buildings led by middle school principals.

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4.3.2 Middle Level Principals' Responses to Epstein's Six Parent Involvement Categories

The next analysis of data looked at respondents' answers to determine if one specific category of Epstein's typology was primarily practiced by middle level principals as well as how individual questions in a specific category compared. In the survey, a total of 39 questions were posed. The first two questions were consent questions. The next 32 questions were grouped into specific categories. The last five questions were about demographics. Table 6 shows the breakdown of questions per category.

Table 6. Survey questions aligned to the six practices

Question Numbers	Practice	Questions Per Practice
3-7	Parenting	5
8-14	Communicating	7
15-19	Volunteering	5
20-24	Learn at Home	5
25-29	Decision Making	5
30-34	Collaborate with the Community	5

Respondents were asked to answer survey questions based on a Likert-type scale: 1 *not occurring*, 2 *rarely*, 3 *occasionally*, 4 *frequently*, and 5 *extensively*. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data from this set of questions as well. The mean, median, frequency, and standard deviation for each practice were calculated and are listed in Table 7.

Table 7. Responses grouped by the specific category

Specific Practice	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
Parenting (Q3-7)	3.0	3.00	0.56
Communicating (Q8-14)	4.0	4.03	0.47
Volunteering (Q15-19)	3.0	3.03	0.76
Learning at Home (Q20-24)	3.2	2.99	0.73
Decision Making (Q25-29)	3.4	3.36	0.77
Collaborating with Community (Q30-34)	3.4	3.37	0.88

The data for the grouped questions in each category indicate middle school principals use activities in the category of communicating most often to involve parents. The mean score of 4.03 (SD=0.47) indicates middle level principals frequently involve parents through practices of communication. Data indicate decision making 3.36 (SD=0.77) and collaborating with the community 3.37 (SD=0.88) are the categories with the next most common practices used to involve parents. Interestingly, the remaining three categories show little difference. The mean score for volunteering was 3.03 (SD=0.76), and parenting has a mean score of 3.0 (SD=0.56). Middle level principals' responses indicate practices in the category learning at home, which had a mean score of 2.99 (SD=0.73), are extensively utilized the least. The category of communicating was identified by principals as one where the most extensive practices existed.

Next, analysis of the data within each of Epstein's categories identified the specific practices middle school principals use per category. Parenting was the first category analyzed. Questions 3-7 are included in this category. The mean was 3.0 (SD=.56). Figure 6 shows the frequency of overall responses per question in the category of parenting.
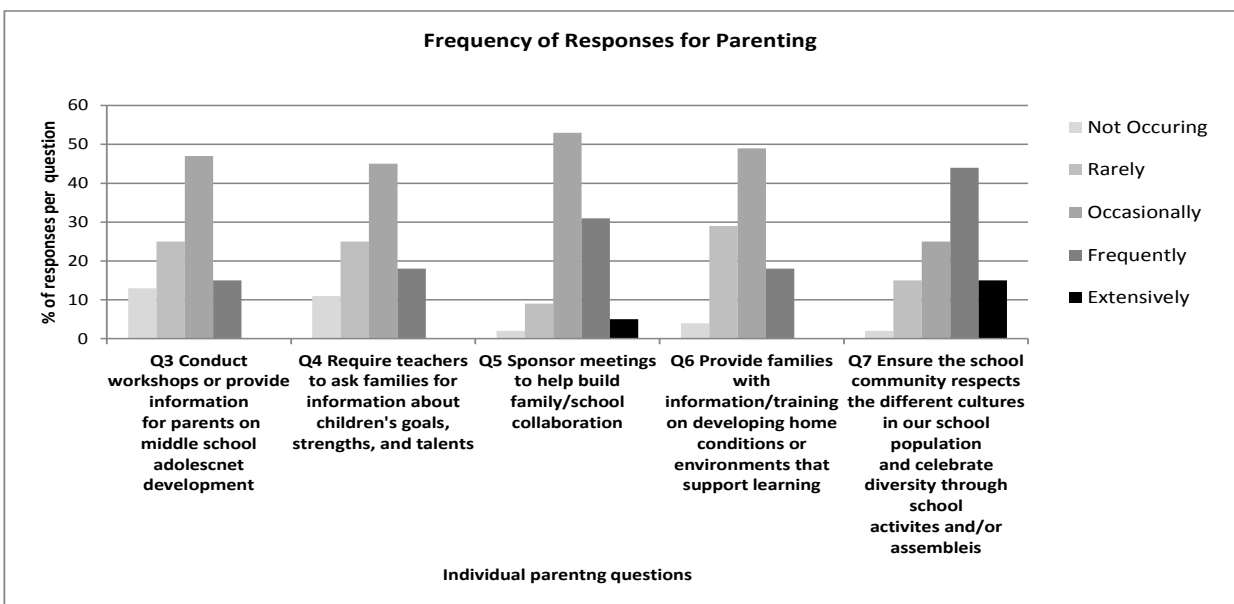
Figure 6. Participant responses to individual parenting questions

Data indicate the practice used most extensively by middle level principals is in the category of parenting. Q7 indicates 15% (n=8) of principals respect various cultures and the diverse nature of the school they lead by implementing activities and assemblies within the school community.

In addition, Question 7 also had the highest amount of middle school principals at 44% (n=24), which indicates this is a frequent practice. Overall 59% (n=32) of principals responded to frequently or extensively celebrating diversity within schools. Responses to Q3 indicate 13% (n=7) of principals do not implement any workshops or information to parents regarding adolescent development and 25% (n=14) of principals rarely conduct workshops.

Middle school principals' responses indicate activities in the category of communication were extensively used to involve parents. Questions 8-14 are grouped in this category. Figure 7 shows data for each individual question in the category. The mean in this category was 4.03 (SD=.47).
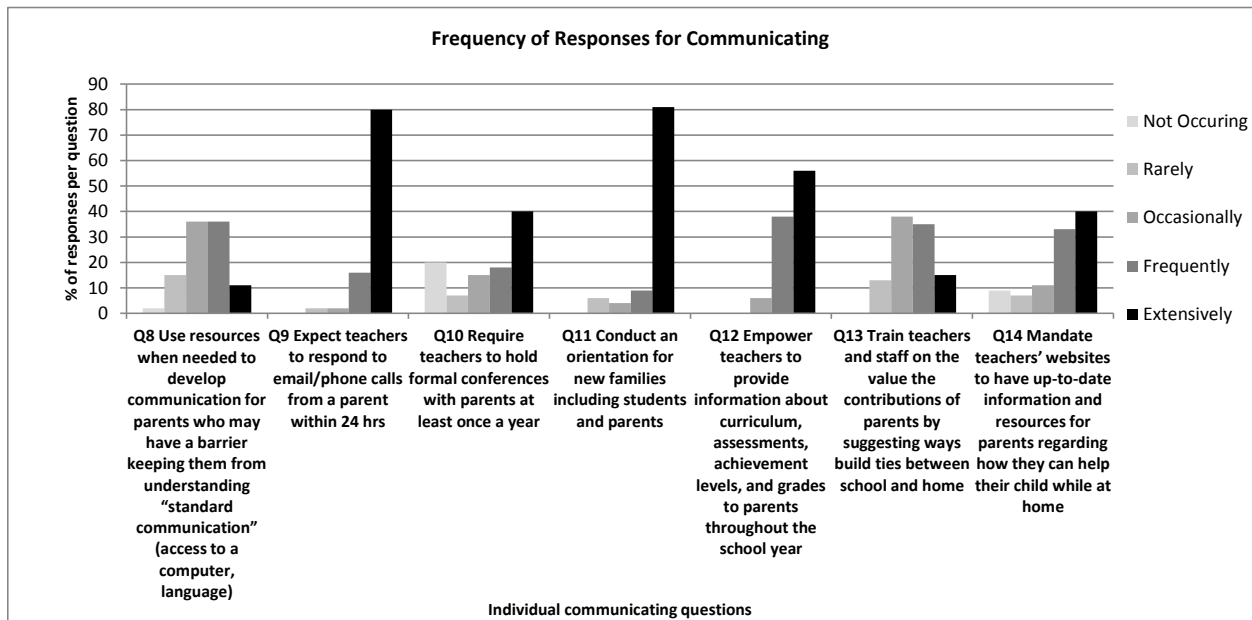
Figure 7. Participant responses to individual communicating questions

Responses from Q9 indicate 80% (n=44) of principals expect teachers to respond to email and and/or phone calls within 24 hours, and additionally 16% (n=9) frequently practice having this occur. Overall, 96% (n=53) of middle level principals use this practice frequently or extensively to involve parents. Responses to Q11 indicate 81% (n=45) of principals involve parents by holding orientation for new families that include both parents and students. The high response in responding to emails and phone calls may be an acceptable and primary form of communication, because Q10 indicated 20% (n=11) of principals do not practice requiring teachers to hold formal conferences at least once a year.

The mean in the category, volunteering, was 3.03 (SD=0.76). Questions 15-19 are grouped in this category and focus on practices used to acquire, support, and recognize volunteers (see Figure 8). School principals' responses (Q16) indicated they extensively practiced communicating the process for volunteers to gain the needed clearances 36% (n=20).
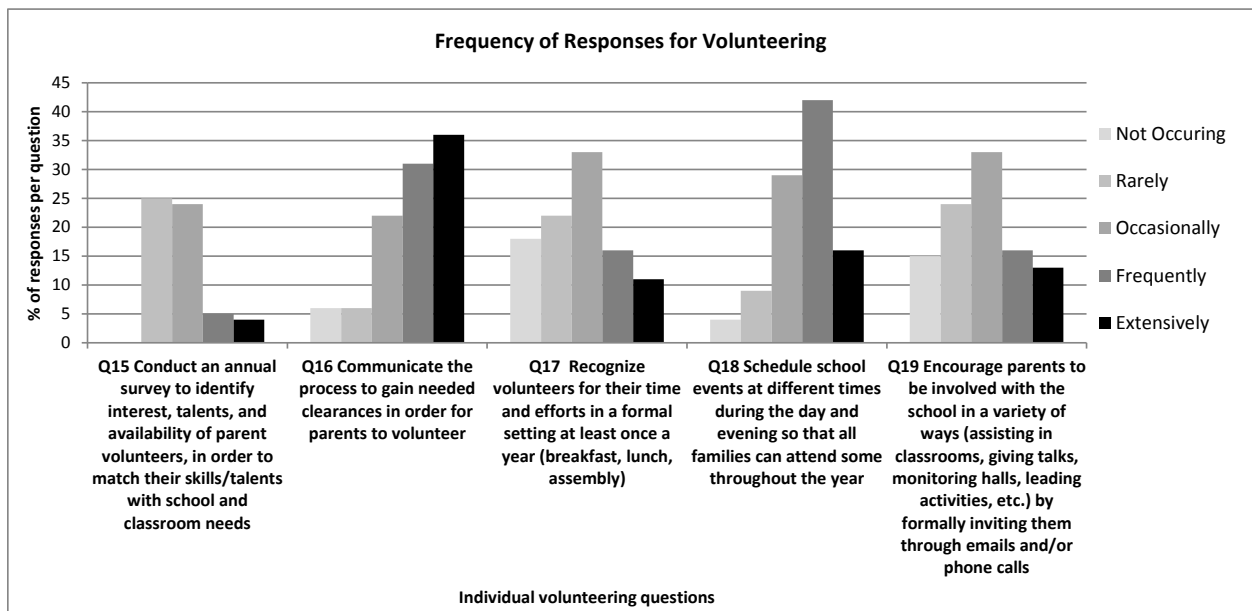
Figure 8. Participant responses to individual volunteering questions

There were two practices principals responded to that were not occurring at all. Responses indicated middle level principals did not conduct annual surveys to identify talents, interests, and availability to match volunteer skills to classroom needs (Q15). Principals also indicated (Q19) they did not formally invite parents to become involved in classroom activities or other volunteering opportunities.

The questions grouped together in the category, learning at home, were analyzed next. This category included questions 20-24. Principals' responses indicated that learning at home was the category where practices lacked. Learning at home has the lowest mean 2.99 (SD=0.72) amongst the six categories. However, the category of parenting had a mean score of 3.00 (SD=0.56). Overall, the difference between these two categories was small. Figure 9 indicates responses for each question in the learning at home category.
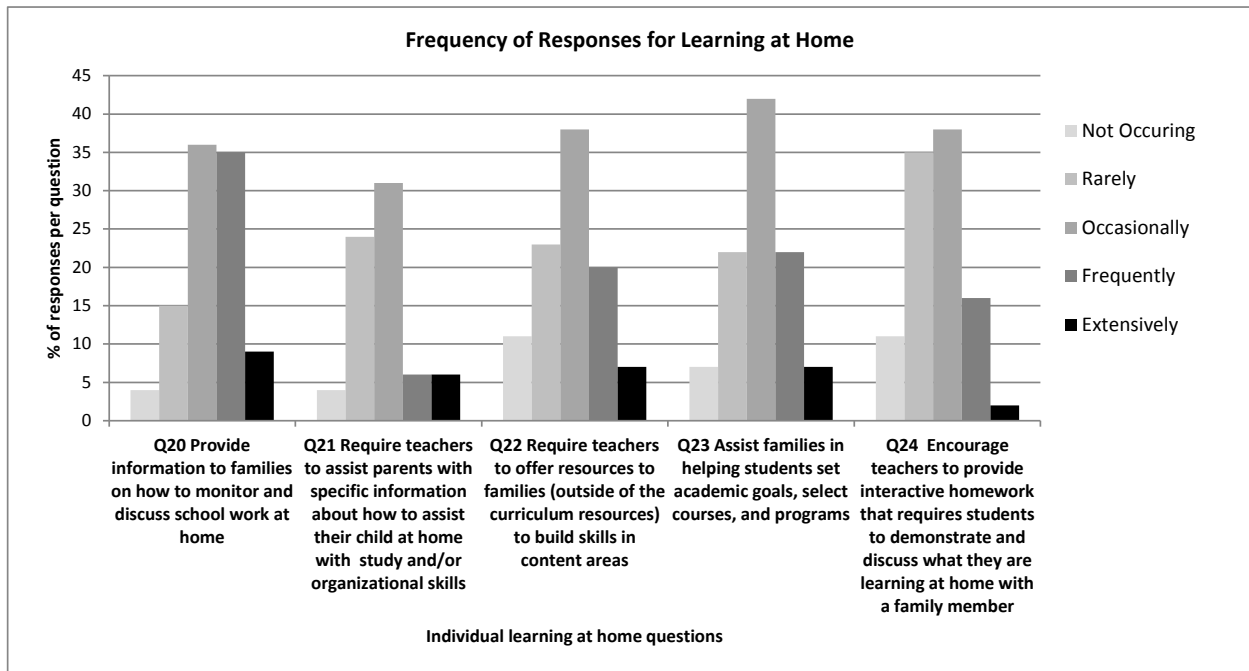
Figure 9. Participant responses to individual learning at home questions

Middle level principals' had a high response of occasionally practicing learning at home activities. Analysis shows the practice completed most extensively in this category is providing information for families to discuss monitoring schoolwork at home (Q20). Responses indicate 9% (n=5) of principals utilized this practice extensively. Of all six categories, principals' responses for practices not occurring happened most often in this category. For each practice (Q20-24), a percentage of principals indicated not using the practice at all.

Decision making was the fifth category analyzed. Figure 10 show responses for questions 25-29 that were grouped for the category decision making.
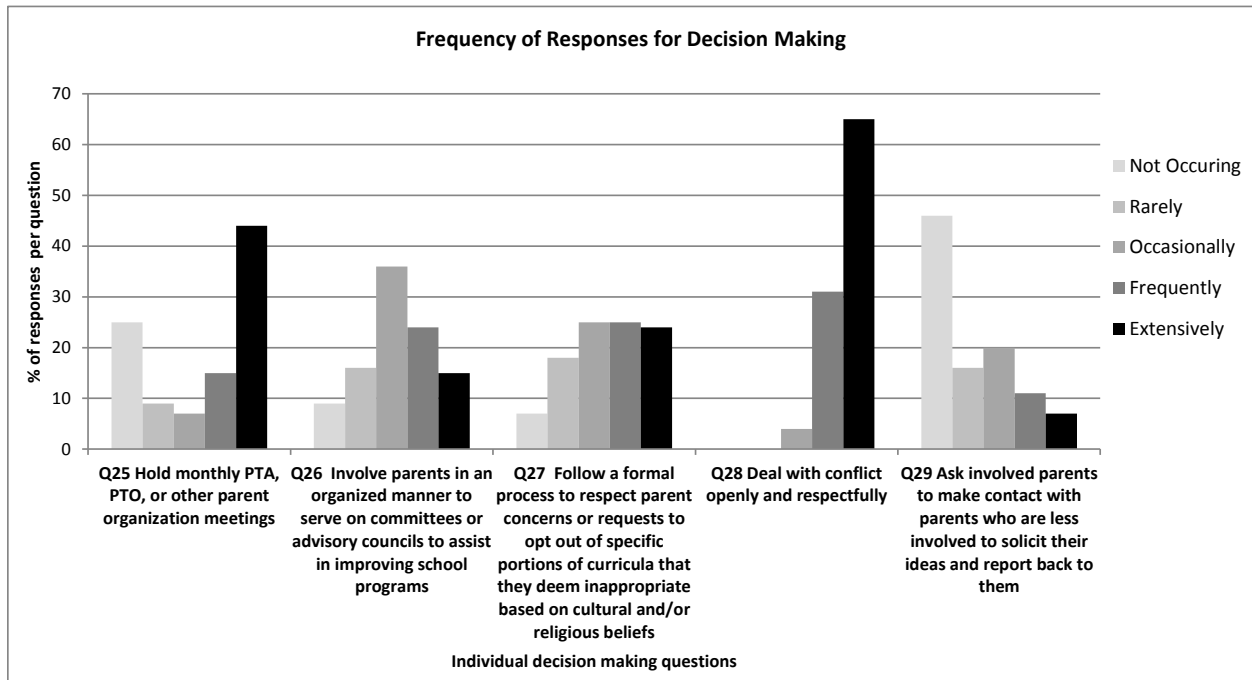
Figure 10. Participant responses to individual decision making questions

Principals' responses to decision making had an overwhelmingly high response in Q28, practicing dealing with conflict openly and respectfully. Overall 65% (n=36) of principals indicated extensively using this practice when making decisions or dealing with conflict. Middle level principals also indicated extensively practicing holding monthly meeting with parent

organizations 44% (n=24). Surprisingly, one of the simplest practices, asking involved parents to contact less involved parents to get ideas (Q29), had the highest response of not occurring 45% (n=25).

The last category analyzed was collaborating with the community. Questions 29-34 were grouped in this category. As a group, the mean was 3.37 (SD=0.88), which was very close to responses in the decision making category. Responses are shown in Figure 11.
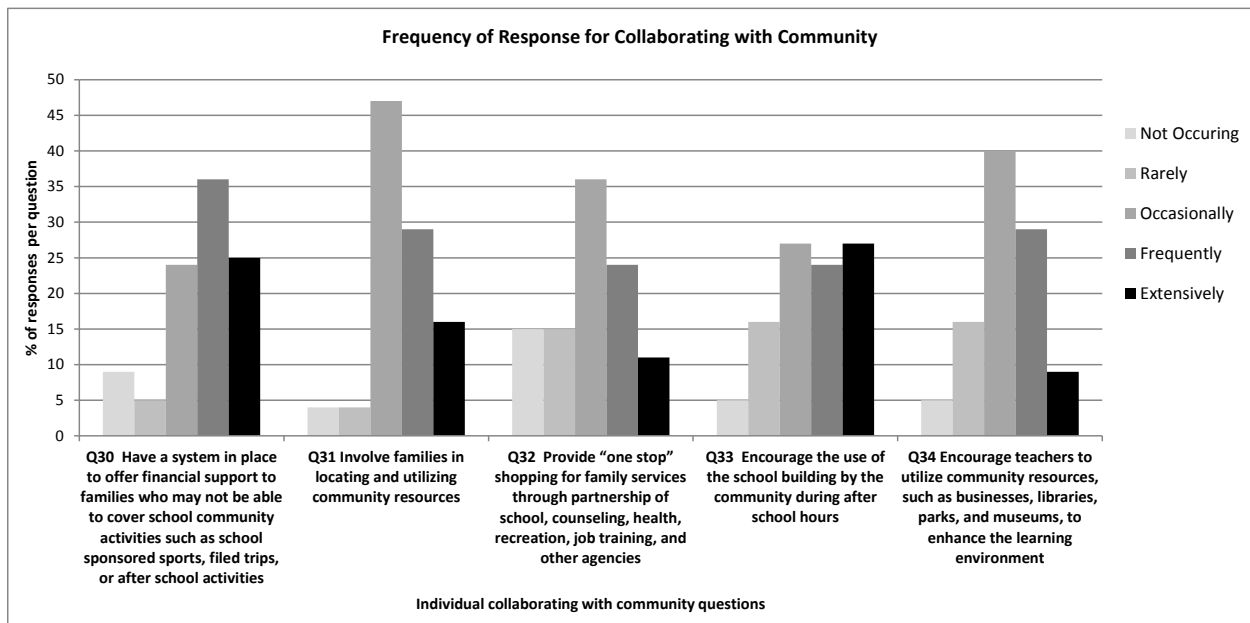
Figure 11. Participant responses to individual collaborating with the community questions

Principals' responses indicated that practicing the encouragement of using the school building by the community after school hours was done most extensively 27% (n=15). Having a system in place to offer financial support to cover costs for activities and filed trips was extensively practiced by 25% (n=14) of principals. However, each question had responses indicating practices were not occurring. Principals' responses indicated one stop shopping for families to seek overall family services was a practice not occurring 15% (n=8).

4.3.2.1 Middle Level Principals' Rank of Epstein's Six Categories

After analyzing the questions grouped into categories, the ranking of Epstein's categories was examined. Table 8 indicates how middle level principals' responses rank the six categories based on the mean score of responses. Practices within the communicating category are most often done within in a school. Data indicated collaborating with the community and decision making are not much different. Volunteering and parenting were ranked next without much difference in use of practices. Principals indicated the category ranked last is learning at home.

Table 8. Ranking of categories based on responses

Specific Practice	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
Communicating (Q8-14)	4.0	4.03	0.47
Collaborating with Community (Q30-34)	3.4	3.37	0.88
Decision Making (Q25-29)	3.4	3.36	0.77
Volunteering (Q15-19)	3.0	3.03	0.76
Parenting (Q3-7)	3.0	3.00	0.56
Learning at Home (Q20-24)	3.2	2.99	0.73

4.3.3 Demographics and Socioeconomics

The final research question involved the analysis of principal demographics and school socioeconomics. The analysis aimed to determine if middle levels principals' practices of parent involvement vary based on years of experience, years leading at current school, gender, percentage of free or reduced meals within the school student population, and the geographical location of the school.

In order to determine the appropriate inferential statistics to use, statistical assumptions were first tested. This included the assumption of normality of the dependent variables using the

Shapiro-Wilk test. For this test, p-values greater than 0.05 indicate the distribution is normal. As per Table 9, all variables were normally distributed. As such, it is appropriate to use parametric statistics (e.g., t-tests, Pearson correlations).

Table 9. Significance of Shapiro-Wilk test

Category	P-value
Parenting	0.256
Communicating	0.877
Volunteering	0.810
Learning at Home	0.054
Decision Making	0.999
Collaborating with the Community	0.471

An additional assumption for using t-tests and similar statistics is that the variances of the dependent variable are approximately equal for all categories of the independent variables. This was tested using Levene's test of homogeneity, where a p-value of <0.05 indicates a violation of homogeneity (i.e., heterogeneity). Results indicated that all comparison tests demonstrated homogeneity, except for Q39 by geographical location (Levene's W = 3.73, p = 0.03). So, for all these comparisons, except one, it is appropriate to use standard t-tests for comparison. In this one violating case, a Welch's test was performed to control for heterogeneity of variance.

4.3.3.1 Years of Experience and Years in Current Position

Principals were asked to respond to total years of experience as a middle level principal. Table 10 is a breakdown of respondents' years of experience as a middle school principal (n=54). There was one principal who did not answer question 35.

Table 10. Years of experience

Years as a Middle Level Principal	Frequency	Percent
0	2	3.64
1	3	5.45
2	4	7.27
2.5	1	1.82
3	4	7.27
3.5	2	3.64
4	6	10.91
5	6	10.91
6	4	7.27
7	2	3.64
8	3	5.45
9	3	5.45
10	2	3.64
11	4	7.37
12	3	5.45
13	1	1.82
14	4	7.27

The mean score for years of experience was 6.37 (SD=4.07). Since responses were open-ended some principals indicated answers by months. Therefore, the breakdown does indicate half years of experience. Interestingly, no principal had more than 14 years of experience as a middle level principal and two indicated they had been a middle level principal for less than a year. Middle level principals were also asked to indicate the years spent in their current position as principal. Table 11 indicates the middle level principals' responses for years in the current position as a middle school principal.

Table 11. Years in current position

Years in Current Position	Frequency	Percent
0	3	5.45
1	4	7.27
1.5	1	1.82
2	9	16.36
2.5	1	1.82
3	4	7.27
3.5	1	1.82

(Table 11 cont.)

4	6	10.91
5	4	7.27
6	4	7.27
7	3	5.45
8	5	9.09
9	1	1.82
10	1	1.82
11	4	7.27
14	3	5.45

The mean score for years of experience was 5.10 (SD=3.76). One principal did not answer question 36 (n=54). Since responses were open-ended some principals indicated answers by months. Therefore, the breakdown does indicate half years of experience.

Pearson correlations were used to compare years of experience and principals' years in his or her current position to variables. Correlations range from -1 to +1 with 0 indicating no correlation. Table 12 indicates correlations between the overall six categories and years of experience and years in current positions as a middle level principal.

Table 12. Comparison of six categories, years of experience, and years in current position

	Parenting	Communicating	Volunteering	Learning at Home	Decision Making	Collaborating with the Community
Years of Experience	0.0663	0.0468	-0.0594	-0.1239	-0.2911*	-0.1446
Years in Current Position	0.0291	0.0565	-0.1276	-0.1197	-0.2027	-0.2345

Only one correlation was statistically significant; as years of experience increases, a principal's use of involving parents through decision making decreases.

4.3.3.2 Gender

A t-test assessed whether the means of males and females were statistically different from each other in their use of parent involvement practices. A p-value less than 0.05 would indicate a significant difference. Based on t-tests, there were no significant differences between males and females among categories. Data indicated 43 males and 12 females responded (n=55). Figure 12 shows the mean scores per gender per category.
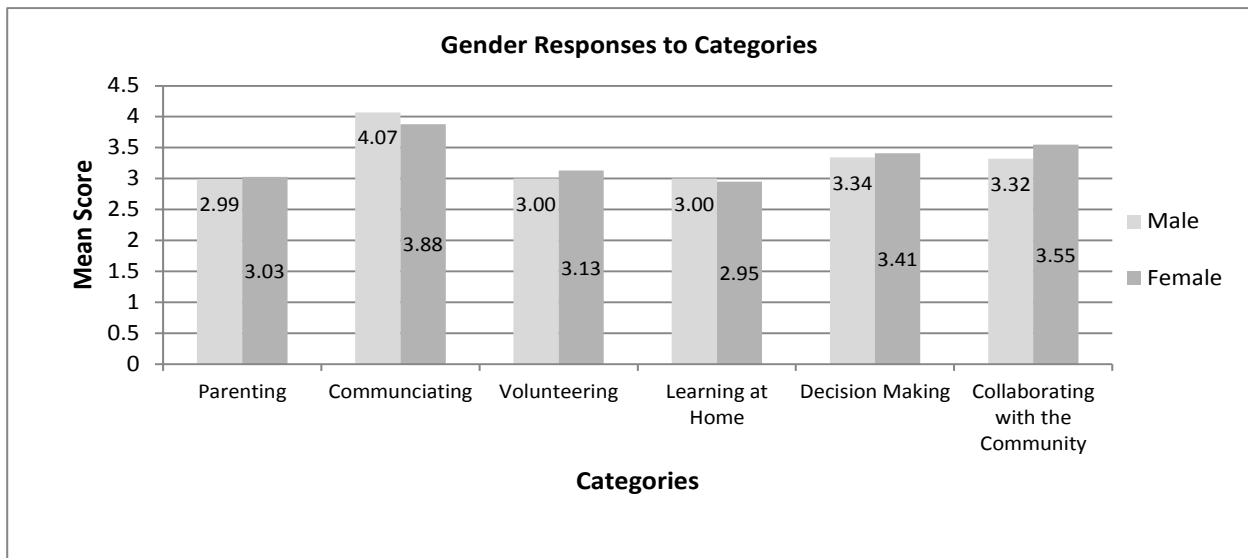
Figure 12. Male and female responses per category

4.3.3.3 Socioeconomics Based on Free and/or Reduced Lunch

When testing more than two groups at a time, an analysis of variance test or ANOVA test can be used. This test was used to analyze significant differences among categories of free and/or reduced lunch percentages. All principals answered this question (n=55). Table 13 shows the overall responses to the school population receiving free or reduced lunches.

Table 13. Free and or reduced lunch responses

Free or Reduced	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 20%	18	32.73
21-40%	20	36.36
41-60%	12	21.82
61% or more	5	9.09

Because there were only 5 schools in the >61% category of free and/or reduced lunch, two categories were combined into a new variable. The three variables became <=20%, 21%-40%, and >40%. Table 14 shows the results per category by mean score when compared among categories of free and reduced lunch in the school population.

Table 14. Mean score reported for free and or reduced lunch per category

	Parenting	Communicating	Volunteering	Learning at Home	Decision Making	Collaborating with the
<=20%	3.05	3.85	3.36	3.04	3.45	3.52
21%-40%	2.96	4.02	2.82	2.9	3.33	3.09
>40%	2.98	4.22	2.94	3.04	3.29	3.55
Total	3.0	4.03	3.03	2.99	3.36	3.37

ANOVA tests detected no significant difference among levels of free and/or reduced lunch percentages on any of the outcome variables. However, responses in the categories of communicating and volunteering demonstrated nearly significant differences in mean scores across free and/or reduced lunch percentages. In the category of communicating <=20% mean score was 3.85 and increases to 4.22 as the free and/or reduced lunch increases to >40% (F=2.86, p=0.067). The mean score of 3.36 for volunteering in the <=20% slightly decreases to 2.94 as the free and/or reduced lunch population increases to >40% (F = 2.83, p=0.068). While these trends are interesting, they are not statistically significant.

4.3.3.4 Geographical Location

Research question three also analyzed the data to detect any relationship between the geographical location of the school and middle level principals' responses to the six categories. The geographical locations were rural, suburban, and urban. Table 15 indicates the frequency and percentages to identify the geographical breakdown of the location of the middle level principals' schools. Because there were more than two categories, ANOVA tests were used to detect significant differences between mean scores for each of the geographic categories.

Table 15. Geographical location data

Geographical Location	Frequency	Percentage
Rural	16	29.09
Suburban	34	61.82
Urban	5	9.09

An analysis of the data when comparing middle level principals' responses within each category by the geographical location does not indicate any significant differences (all p-values > 0.05). Table 16 details the data listing the mean score for each category across geographical location categories.

Table 16. Mean score for geographical location per category

	Parenting	Communicating	Volunteering	Learning at Home	Decision Making	Collaborating with the Community
Rural	2.98	4.12	2.75	2.97	3.37	3.41
Suburban	2.97	3.95	3.17	2.98	3.39	3.33
Urban	3.2	4.25	3.00	3.12	3.20	3.52

In summary, specific practices were identified as being used extensively and some were identified by principals as not occurring. Middle level principals' responses indicated communicating was the category they most often used among the listed practices in order to

involve parents. Overall, the demographics showed some interesting trends, but did not show significant statistical differences.

5.0   DISCUSSION

The findings in this study will assist middle level principals to better understand the current practices used to involve parents. Involving parents in their child(ren)'s education is an important educational practice. As a current middle level principal, I understand the dynamics families go through as an adolescent communicates his or her need for independence. During these normal but tumultuous times at the middle level, I have reminded both the child and parent that working together is always best. Both the child and the parent need to be involved in the school community, and there are various ways to build independence while also allowing a parent to remain involved in the educational process. Often students at the middle level balk at having a parent come to the school to assist with a program. However, when no one is looking, the child runs over to the parent and gives them a quick kiss on the cheek.

Throughout the literature review, it is clear there are many benefits to a child when parent(s) stay involved in the educational process. A child's attendance, academic achievement, behavior, attitude, and mental health improve when parents are involved in the educational process (Comer & Hayes, 1991; Epstein, 2008; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). The literature review identified reasons why parents may not become involved in their child's education. Parents do not always feel welcomed into schools, language barriers prevent involvement, work schedules, and psychological factors can keep parents from becoming involved in school (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Matuszny, Devender, & Coleman, 2007; Trotman, 2001). Griffith (2001) found that

principals play a role in facilitating parent involvement; principals who develop a supportive environment and positive school climate within a school had higher levels of parent involvement. It is imperative that a principal is able to facilitate parent involvement and use various practices other than just having parents help with homework.

Epstein's (1995, 2002, 2011) research focused on creating a partnership between parents, teachers, students, and others in order to create a caring community around students. Understanding the importance of parent involvement and knowing principals play a key role led to this study collecting data on middle level principals' parent involvement practices. Epstein's (1995) typology, which identifies six parent involvement categories, was used as a framework. Due to the unique development of an adolescent's desire to be independent, the importance for parents to stay involved, and the key role a principal plays in building a positive and welcoming school community, I wanted this study to inform middle level principals as to the current practices used to involve parents.

This chapter begins by detailing my personal experiences and how they shape the comments and wonderings regarding the findings. The next sections include discussions about the findings, implications for policy and practice, recommendations for future research, limitations, and conclusions.

5.1   SUMMARY OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

This exploratory study reflects on my personal experiences in education and has afforded me the opportunity to create discourse about some of my own wonderings regarding the findings. I taught in both parochial and public school systems. After 10 years of teaching middle school, I

entered into administration and served as an assistant principal at a middle school. The schools I have worked in have been middle class to upper middle class with the majority of the student body being Caucasian. All of the schools have been in a suburban setting. This is important to note because another researcher who had very different work experiences could reflect differently on the findings. For example, an educator who works with English language learners in an urban setting could make meaning of the findings in a different manner. There is no right or wrong. However, it is important to understand my personal experiences and how my experiences shape comments and wonderings about the findings.

As the findings are discussed, the reader should note middle school is very different than elementary. This is important because Epstein's framework for this study was mostly used at the elementary level. There are complexities existing at the middle level that do not exist at the elementary level. First, middle school teaming is common. This allows middle school students to be heterogeneously grouped and assigned to specific teachers. Although the grouping allows students to connect with each other and specific teachers, often there can be 7-10 teachers they interact with on a daily basis. At the elementary level, it is common for students to be self-contained and only be instructed by 2-3 teachers daily. In many cases at the elementary level the homeroom teacher is the one contact parents can utilize throughout the school year. This is not usually the case at the middle level. In fact the homeroom teacher for a middle school student may never instruct students in his or her homeroom. This difference directly impacts how parents connect to a school. Principals structure parent involvement differently at the elementary level than the middle level purely based on the complexity of the middle school structure. However, the adaptations made to the original to the survey, which was often used at the elementary level, has assisted in capturing parent involvement practices principals use at the middle level.

5.2   MIDDLE LEVEL PRINCIPALS' RESPONSES TO INDIVIDUAL PRACTICES

The first research question aimed to collect data on questions 3-34 to determine which practices middle school principals used or did not use.The Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnership survey (Epstein et al., 2002) was revised and used in this study in order to reflect current practices like the use of technology for communication (Appendix B). Individual practices (described in each question) are aligned to the six parent involvement categories.

Practices middle level principals used "extensively" included requiring teachers to hold conferences with parents, mandating teachers' websites to be current, empowering teachers to provide information about curriculum, assessment, and grades to parents throughout the school year, and expecting teachers to respond to parent emails or phone calls within 24 hours. Practices middle level principals used extensively also included holding monthly parent organization meetings and holding orientations for new families including parents and students.

It was interesting to note that the practices used extensively could be delineated by practices principals require teachers to do and practices middle level principals do themselves. Middle level principals supervising teachers' actions and requiring them to adhere to specific parent involvement practices facilitated parent involvement. This is not to say the principals do not take responsibility for involving parents. Overall, principals requiring teachers to adhere to specific practices were done "extensively". Middle school principals who are collaborative build a trusting relationship with teachers; strong principals know the teachers they lead. A principal needs to be able to identify teachers who may not be comfortable working with parents and assist them to gain the needed strategies to do so successfully. A principal must set teachers up for success.

Practices extensively used are proactive rather than reactive. Principals' responses for practices done extensively identified they need to occur in a timely manner, for example, returning call within 24 hours, discussing grades throughout the year, and keeping website information current. These are also practices that are embedded into the daily jobs of educators.

Principal responses indicated "frequent" practices in respecting diversity through school activities and scheduling school events at various times to accommodate work schedules. These frequent practices assist in breaking down barriers discussed in the literature. Research indicated a trend in minority parents feeling unwelcomed, alienated, or isolated (Matuszny, Devender, and Coleman, 2007; Trotman, 2001). Therefore, celebrating diversity and respecting work schedules to invite parents to become part of the school community is a welcomed involvement practice principals should be utilizing. However, responses indicated a little over half of principals do not consistently practice removing communication barriers for parents who may not understand "standard communication". This may be because principals are not aware of the needs of families within the school. Parents may not want to admit a language barrier exists. Principals may not have any communication expertise in any other language but English. I have experienced families not indicating a need for English language services for their child because they are fearful of the stigma created by being in a separate class.

Principals also responded to frequently requiring teachers to discuss with parents how to assist their child at home with such things as organization and study skills. Assisting parents financially with fees for school sponsored activities and sports were also frequently practiced. These frequent practices show a willingness to support parents. Research indicated parents may not be able to become involved due to socioeconomics (Lareau, 1987; Stacer & Perrucci, 2012).

If a parent cannot afford to have their child participate in a school sponsored event, it can keep both the child and parents from feeling a connection to the school.

Most surprising were the findings regarding middle level principals' responses to practices "not occurring". Almost half of the principals indicated they do not conduct surveys to match parent volunteers' interests and talents to classroom needs. Doing this would provide teachers with valuable information about what volunteers could offer beyond assisting with parties and field trips. Parents have a multitude of talents. These talents and skills could be meaningful to classroom teachers as they present lessons. Collaboration could be taken to a much deeper level if the talents, interests, and expertise of parents were common knowledge within the school community. This finding is concerning because literature indicates parent involvement drops off as the secondary level (Borough& Irvin, 2001; Dauber & Epstein, 1989). I can acknowledge that it does become more challenging to initiate activities where parents are invited into classrooms to volunteer, but when parents are given the opportunity to offer specific talents or experiences, teachers are excited and willing to tap into parents' expertise.

When looking to identify ways to involve parents, simple invites from teachers motivated parents (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Parents felt welcomed when receiving an invitation to become involved. However, some principals responded that the practice of asking parents who are involved to reach out to other parents is not occurring. This simple task of inviting parents to become involved, through either recruiting involved parents to do so or by principals taking time to do this, could increase parent involvement.

5.3   MIDDLE LEVEL PRINCIPALS' RESPONSES TO THE SIX CATEGORIES

The second research question aimed to determine how middle level principals responded to the parenting categories: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. Each individual category will be reviewed and discussed.

5.3.1   Parenting

The category of parenting contains questions regarding practices principals use to assist parents to understand adolescent development that occurs during middle school. Practices in tis category also assist parents to learn about their child's goals and strengths and how families and schools can collaborate throughout the school year. Practices also focus on the school community respecting each other. Principals' responses in the parenting category had the least amount or responses for extensively using practices.

This is an interesting finding because as a practicing principal, I would have thought more effort would be made to work collaboratively with parents. Epstein's spheres of influence (1995) detail the need for school, parent, and community to work together to best support a child. The practices in this category require a principal to really know the school community and be able to determine the training and types of meetings needed to build collaboration within the school community. This can be difficult especially if parents are not comfortable discussing the challenges they experience while raising kids. In addition, a principal must be comfortable asking questions about the home environment. This is not an easy task for some principals especially if the principal has no connections to the community other than work. Living in the

community or spending time outside of the work day can vastly strengthen a principal's knowledge about the community.

5.3.2 Communicating

Middle level principals' responses indicated practices within the category of communicating scored the highest mean. This category includes practices where both principals and teachers have either face-to-face interaction with parents and students through phone or email. This category is most likely the one in which practices occur most easily, because email has made it relatively quick and easy to communicate with parents. Some of the questions in this category can relate to practices being accomplished electronically by posting information on websites or using email. In addition, the practices are also common. The practices in this category are the types of practices principals or teachers would be completing on a daily basis; these practices are embedded into their jobs.

Although this category had the highest mean, there are several things to consider regarding the category of communication. It is evident principals are communicating via email and websites. However, this could be one-way communication. Based on the question, there is no way to know, if parents and principals are engaging in conversations through email. Findings indicated principals were supporting parents by assisting them with resources, like access to a computer, to help with understanding standard communication. However, this was not the case with all principals, and it does need to be noted that not all parents have access to a computer Therefore, although principals are disseminating important school related information, parents may never receive it.

In addition, even when parents receive written communication, they may not be able to understand it due to language barriers. Ji and Koblinsky (2009) studied Chinese immigrants and learned that parents reviewed report cards but had no understanding of the grades because of the language barrier. Modern technology has allowed translation to occur through the use of different websites. Again, principals need to be aware some families may not have access to a computer.

A parent's education level can affect the ability to understand the communication. Even when a parent receives written communication, there is no way to know if they understand it. For example, written documents given to parents of students receiving special education services are not easy to understand. A study done to review the reading levels of special education documents indicated that only 4% to 8% of Parents' Rights documents were written at the recommended reading level. To the contrary, 20% to 50% of the documents were written at a college reading level or higher (Fitzgerald & Watkins, 2006). This is only one example of the challenges some parents may face when trying to understand written communication.

There is a different perspective of the findings when considering the practices in communication may be one-way and not easily understood by parents due to either language barriers or education.

5.3.3 Volunteering

Practices in this category encourage parents to volunteer and recognize their efforts to take part in the school community. Responses indicated there was great effort made by principals to communicate the process to gain the necessary clearances. However, there is a contradiction with this finding because principals lacked gaining information about how parents

can volunteer and/or offer their expertise. This could be done by offering a survey to parents in order to match interests with the needs of classroom teachers. Parents could also be asked to volunteer on a specific day and time convenient for them and be assigned activities to do within the school. These simple invites are beneficial as Anderson and Minke (2007) studied parent involvement and found, personal motivation, invitation, and life context, should directly affect parental decisions to become involved. Therefore, it is important to invite parents to volunteer within the school and understand ways to make them comfortable volunteering. It is possible that parent-teacher organizations are conducting the surveys in order to facilitate parent involvement within the school. Although principals, themselves are not conducting the surveys, it might be happening.

The findings indicated principal's practices decreased in volunteering as free and/or reduced lunch percentages increased. This is interesting and could be because principals are being respectful of parents who may only have one car or not able to secure babysitters for siblings. Often when parents volunteer at school bringing younger children is not possible due to the tasks involved in the volunteering opportunities like running centers, reading to students, and organizing meetings.

Principals need to have some awareness that not all parents are comfortable volunteering in the school. Parents may feel they do not have anything to offer to the school. Therefore a principal needs to think outside of the box to include parents. Parents can feel included by handing out programs at an evening event or monitoring sign-in tables for events. Parents can be asked to place items in mailboxes for teachers or water plants around the school. Any of these opportunities allow parents to spend time in the school and helps develop a home and school collaborative effort.

Interestingly, from my experience parents do not need clearances if they are not directly alone and working with students. Principals are communicating the process for gaining clearances, but the parents may not truly need them for certain volunteering opportunities. Also, gaining the needed clearances does cost money. Not all families can afford the cost, so principals need to consider alternative opportunities for parents who may not be able to afford the clearances.

5.3.4 Learning at Home

Data indicated learning at home had the lowest mean. Practices in this category require planning and effort. In review of the questions, the practices take on an individualized approach to supporting families which can be a time-consuming endeavor. For example, setting academic goals for students, requiring teachers to assist parents with specific information to assist students at home, and offering skill-building resources to families can be different for every student and family. This is not to say the practices would not be extremely beneficial. However, the ability for teachers to provide such individualization could be a reason why practices are somewhat more challenging for principals to require. Schools may also lack the resources needed to accomplish such individualization.

This finding reiterates that some teachers, especially pre-service teachers, may not have the training to work with families, and principals may be aware of this. Literature indicated at times college level courses for teacher training included no standalone courses rather parent involvement was a topic touched upon in literary and introductory courses (Baum & Swick, 2008; Graue & Brown, 2003; Hindin, 2010; Uldag, 2008). Not having the background knowledge to know how to assist families is a reality for some novice teachers. Also, principals

might be aware that some teachers are not comfortable asking questions about what happens in the home regarding study skills and time set aside for homework. There could be a belief that this is prying into the personal lives of families. It could be that principals utilize the school counselor in order to have one contact for parents when assisting with supporting learning in the home. At the middle level a student could have 6-9 teachers each day. The school counselor is one person who can consult with teachers and then speak to the parent on a consistent basis regarding ways to support the child at home.

5.3.5   Decision Making

Questions in the category of decision making detail practices of parent involvement that go beyond assisting with such things such as chaperoning and organizing events. Principals ask parents to get involved in decision making within the school by becoming members of committees and and/or organizations. Questions also focus on respecting parents' decision making regarding portions of the curricula that families deem inappropriate based on cultural or religious beliefs. Questions also address dealing with conflict in an open and respectful manner.

Some of the questions in this category would be considered socially acceptable practices. Dealing with conflict openly and respectfully is something principals are expected to do. Therefore it is not surprising almost all principals indicated frequently or extensively dealing with conflict openly and respectfully. Principal responses indicate parents are only occasionally being involved in meetings to improve the schools. Perhaps principals are inviting parents to meetings, but the parents are not attending. It could be that principals do not want to have parents involved for various reasons like parents lacking the knowledge of the school system. One of the simplest practices requires principals to ask involved parents to reach out to less involved

parents. Almost half of the principals indicated this is not occurring. Although this practice could be easily accomplished, the first task would be to identify involved parents and communicate an action plan. This takes time and a commitment to hold follow-up meetings. It could be principals do not have the time to commit. Principals could be happy having the parents who do not need persuaded or invited to get involved as part of the school community.

It should be noted that one correlation was statistically significant; as years of experience increases, a principal's use of practices to involve parents through decision making decreases. There could be many reasons for this. For example, principals may begin to gain the confidence needed to make decisions and no longer value parents' input as much.

5.3.6   Collaborating with the Community

Collaborating with the community focuses on principals' practices that engage students and families in the school community and surrounding community.   Principals responded they encourage the use of the school building outside of school hours. This allows various activities to occur after school. Parents attending clubs and activities their children participate in after school can develop a sense of pride in the school community. These events also provide opportunities for families to talk and engage with one another. Also, principals responded they have a system in place to assist with fees and costs for student participation in school athletics, activities, and field trips. Principals understand the constraints families may have and understand the benefits students and families can experience when participating in these school events.

Responses were inconsistent regarding providing community resources to families for things like counseling, mental health services, recreation, and job training. Providing community resources to families can be challenging for several reasons. First, families do not always feel

comfortable discussing individual family needs with the principal. These requests may go through the school counselor or social worker. In addition, a principal must be cautious to assign resources to a family as the school cannot be responsible for the financial cost for things like counseling or mental health services. Depending on the location of the school the available resources vary. Over half of the principals responding to the survey worked in middle schools located in a suburban area. Principals in rural areas might have limited resources.

Principals are reaching out to families, not just students, and making efforts to include families into the school community. There is room to grow when developing volunteering opportunities within the school building as well as building teachers' knowledge to individually support students with learning at home. In addition, principals need to consider various volunteer activities that may not require clearances and make an effort to survey parents and match skills to classroom needs. Principals should also invite parents to volunteer in the school.

5.4   VARYING RESPONSES DUE TO DEMOGRAPHICS

This section discusses how middle level principals' practices of parent involvement vary by years of experience, years leading their current school, gender, percentage of free and/or reduced meals within the school student population, and the geographical location of the school.

Principals ranged from having less than one year of leadership to having 14 years of experience both as a middle level principal, as well as, leading in a current school. The responses indicate that both novice and veteran middle level principals responded to this survey. Findings indicated only one significant difference, which was as years of experience as a middle level principal increases, involving parents in decision making decreases. This could occur because as

principals gain experience they establish positive practices and knowledge about what works in the school community, therefore, they may be less inclined to include parents in the decision making process.

The mean scores for gender indicated no significant differences. Mean scores between genders were very similar. As a practicing middle level principal, this particular finding was surprising. Many of the events like PTO meetings, programs regarding middle school day scheduling, or volunteer programs are heavily attended by mothers. Although this was not discussed in the literature review, my experiences led me to believe female principals' (because they could be mothers) mean scores would be slightly higher across all categories. My thought was female principals might be more likely to facilitate practices of parent involvement that they may also be involved in as a mother. The data indicated this was not the case. The category, collaborating with the community, had the largest mean difference between males and females, but it was a very slight difference with females slightly higher than males. It was also surprising that the majority of responses were from male principals. This researcher believed responses would have been more equal across genders. The amount of participation from male principals versus female principals was unexpected. Throughout my administrative experiences, I have worked with more female principals at the middle level than male principals. Although I think my experience is unique, I did expect responses from particpants to be gender balanced.

Socioeconomics data were analyzed by collecting data on free and/or reduced lunch percentages within the schools. Due to the nature of responses, the original four variables were combined into three variables. There were no significant findings when analyzing mean responses for free and/or reduced lunch against the parenting categories. However, although not significant, there were some interesting findings. Middle level principals' practices in the

communicating category increased as free and/or reduced lunch percentages increased. Principal responses indicate they are making conscious choices to incre ase communication to include parents by who may have to work throughout the day and have less ability to get involved with the school community. William and Sanchez (2011) referred to parents' limitations to get involved in school events as "time poverty" This means parents have activities at home (taking care of siblings) or away from the school (work) that limit their ability to get involved at school. Responses indicate principals have an awareness of the need to communicate more due to the socioeconomics of the families attending school.

Also, in the category of volunteering, principals' practices decreased as the free and/or reduced lunch population increased. This interesting finding could also be due to the "time poverty" parents experience when having to work more or in the evenings as well as also having additional responsibilities at home. Disposable income allows families to afford babysitters, possess two cars, and even have housecleaners freeing up time (Lareau, 1987). Families with lower socioeconomics have decreased disposable income, which would certainly explain the inability to volunteer. Throughout my tenure as a middle level principal, I have noted an increase of both parents working. While some families choose to have two working parents, some families need both parents to work to sustain the basics like food and shelter. In no way does the decrease in volunteering indicate a decreased desire to be involved.

The relationship between the geographical location of the school and middle level principals' responses to the parenting categories resulted in no significant findings. Interestingly, principals' mean scores were consistently higher in schools in the urban locations. The overall highest mean score in the category of communicating was also in the urban location. There were only five principals falling into this variable, so data was limited. The responses indicate more

consistency with principals' initiating practices in all six parenting categories in the urban location. This researcher has experience only leading in a suburban school setting. However, it could be urban schools are considered as neighborhood schools and tightly connected within a small radius. Often, students are able to walk to city schools. This may indicate the ability for parents to be connected to the schools because they accompany their child on the walk to and from school each day or because the schools are easily accessible due to the close proximity.

5.5   IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

This study was conducted because the research indicated that principals play a key role in facilitating parent involvement, but there was a gap in the research on how middle level principals involve parents. Overall, the findings in this study were not statistically significant. However, middle level principals seem to have some understanding of important practices aligning to the six parenting categories. Middle level principals looking to increase parent involvement could reference this study to determine what current practices are being used or not occurring at all based on the responses. A principal could take the survey and look at his or her own responses and correlate them to students' academic achievement or other variables like discipline within their building. If a principal identifies parent involvement is lacking, and knows parent involvement decreases at the middle level, they may begin adopting the many practices suggested in this study.

Principals reviewing this study can understand requirements they need teachers to fulfill to facilitate parent involvement which enhances the school community. At times, the overwhelming demands placed on teachers can cause frustration. This study highlights the

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positive impact parent involvement has on students. Principals can use this information to with teachers and share the positive impact parent involvement has on students and the school community. Teachers can take a critical look at what they do and make improvements as needed. Principals can then work to implement the appropriate training for teachers.

The lack of training for pre-service teachers to be comfortable with using practices of parent involvement was discussed in the literature review. As a current principal, I can state that this issue may also exist in the administrative certification programs. I cannot recall any required courses that discuss the benefits of parent involvement. It could be extremely beneficial for administrative programs to include required coursework to train principals on practices that can be used to involve parents. As a principal starts a new position he or she may not know the type of school community he or she will lead. Administrative programs should detail action steps for principals allowing them to be fully prepared to learn about and understand the school community in order to determine the best practices they can use to involve parents. When a principal understands parents face barriers because of socioeconomics, language, work schedules, and/or lack of education they can begin the think of ways to overcome these barriers within a school community.

Induction programs for principals should also address the need for parent involvement. This usually includes an overall understanding of the school community in which he or she will lead. Principals should learn about the level of involvement parents currently have in the school. Principals should be aware of barriers parents face in order to be prepared to improve parent involvement by removing barriers. If socioeconomics or language barriers exist, a principal should know this in advance in order to appropriately create parent involvement opportunities.

Principals should conduct professional development for teachers. Each school building has a unique culture. Principals need to make teachers aware of the community in order to best address families. They should understand the demographics of the community and be prepared to involve parents based on the needs of the school community. The principal needs to set a solid foundation for teachers in order to build a cohesive and collaborative school community.

Current policies and safety regulations affect the warm and welcoming environment. Vestibules, identification checks, escorts to classrooms, and the cost of the needed clearances can make the process of volunteering daunting. My experience has been parents are appreciative of the safety policies, but at times wish they could just walk into the school without the delay of scanning their license. Principals need to work extremely hard to balance the safety of students with building a school climate that is welcoming. Parent meetings are often held throughout the school day. Holding a few in the evening eliminates the need to check identification, as well as addressing the ability for working parents to attend the meeting.

Building goals are developed by the principal. It would be appropriate to have a goal that focused on parent involvement. The goal could be measured by counting volunteer opportunities and expanding them each year. Explaining the available opportunities to parents and inviting them into the school benefits all involved.

5.6   RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study looked to identify middle level principals' practices of parent involvement based on Epstein's (1995) typology. Elementary and high school principals did not take part in this study. Future research could be done to administer the survey to elementary and/or high school

principals. Once data are gathered, it could be worthwhile to compare various parent involvement practices across elementary and secondary administrators.

Attendance, academic achievement, behavior, attitude, and mental health of children improve when parents are involved in the educational process (Comer & Hayes, 1991; Epstein, 2008; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). This study did not seek to analyze if principals who responded to extensively using parent involvement practices had students with better attendance, high academic achievement, positive behavior and attitude, and improved mental health. Future research could identify principals who use these practices extensively and then determine if students are overall experiencing more success which could be linked to the extensive use of parent involvement practices.

Middle level principals who are members of the Pennsylvania Association for Middle Level Administrators (PAMLE) took part in this survey. This association follows a middle level philosophy and believes educating the whole child is important. Members, especially those who take part in the yearly conferences and meetings offered by PAMLE, might be more expert in understanding adolescents than nonmembers. Future research could compare responses from members of PAMLE to nonmember responses. This data could indicate if there is any difference between the two groups.

Self-efficacy was discussed in the literature review. A future study could look to link middle level principals' parent involvement practices to his or her self-efficacy. It would be interesting to see if a principal with high self-efficacy does involve parents more extensively than a principal who lacks self-efficacy. A principal with a high level of self-efficacy could also build teachers' practices of parent involvement.

There were no significant findings regarding use of practices among male and female principals. There was one significant finding which was as a principal's years of experience increased, practices used to involve parents in decision making decreased. A future study could look to determine if this finding was consistent with both male and female principals. It would be interesting to see if males or females (or both) lack involving parents in decision making and other categories as they gain experience in leadership.

When analyzing free and/or reduced lunch data, although not significant, there were two interesting findings. Principals' practices increased in communication as free and/or reduced lunch percentage increased and practices decreased in volunteering as free/and or reduced lunch percentages increased. A future study could be done with principals leading successful schools (high academic achievement and attendance rates, low discipline) in lower socioeconomic areas to determine best practices used to involve parents. These best practices can then be communicated allowing principals to create appropriate opportunities that are currently being used in successful schools with lower socioeconomics.

5.7   LIMITATIONS

There are limitations in all studies. As in any self-reported study, answers are based on the respondents' understanding of the questions and willingness to be honest while answering the questions. Respondents' perceptions of themselves and their practices of parent involvement may not be reality. Some of the survey questions may have been answered in order to meet socially acceptable practices principals are expected to do. Furthermore, since the survey was taken in a single point in time, a respondent's mood or the environment in which completing the

survey could affect the outcome of answers. The survey was administered to middle level principals, some who are members of the Pennsylvania Association for Middle Level Educators. As part of the middle school philosophy, parent involvement is a highly regarded practice. Participants working with an organization that focuses on middle level education may have a higher level of commitment to middle level education and a desire to continue learning best practices. Respondents may be more aware of benefits of parent involvement versus colleagues who work in a grade configuration like a junior/senior high school. Finally, the respondents are in the Western Region of Pennsylvania and in the public school system, and although the sample size was adequate, one cannot generalize the findings to other areas of the state or country.

5.8   CONCLUSIONS

Parent involvement has the potential to enhance the overall well-being of students. Although there are times when parents may not be involved, research indicates concrete reasons as to why they are unable to do so. These reasons include negative experiences while in school, language barriers, time poverty, and socioeconomics (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; Lareau, 1987; William & Sanchez, 2011). When parents are not involved in their child(ren)'s education, it is not because parents do not care. Students benefit when school and home work together. This study listed reasons why teachers may not involve parents. Teachers may not have received the appropriate training, lack self-efficacy, or have personal experiences of not having involved parents (Bandura, 1997; Caspe, 2003; Patte, 2011). Therefore, it is imperative to have a key person facilitating parent involvement; this person is the principal.

Principals play a key role in the implementation and development of parent involvement and communicate the values of parents and the role they play in a school community (Dornbusch & Ritter, 1988; Richardson, 2009). Research was sparse specifically on middle level principals' parent involvement practices, and this study has contributed to a better understanding of current practices based on Epstein's (1995) typology including six parenting categories of parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community.

Middle level principals' responses indicate they are involving parents in each of the six categories. Communicating electronically was a practice used by principals. This is an appropriate, effective, and quick way to keep parents involved in school occurrences and also provides timely feedback regarding student progress. However, all parents may not be able to read and understand the communication. Therefore, communication could be only one-way. Responses indicated principals' practice that seemed to require teachers or themselves to individualize activities for students and families, like listing specific resources a child can use at home, were not as commonly practiced.

Although male and female middle level principals responded to the survey, there was a much larger response from males and the overall responses did not vary. There was statistically significant finding which was as a principal's years of experience increases practices in involving parents in decision making decrease. This finding is disappointing because the hope would be to always include parents in decision making regardless of a principal's experience. Principals with years of experience who decrease the use of parent involvement practices indicates the need for professional development to occur either throughout the administrative certification programs or induction programs at the district level in order for them the fully

understand the benefits of parent involvement and be able use practices throughout his or her career.

The world in which we live in has brought many changes to the leadership role of a principal. High stakes testing, aligning curriculum to standards, completing teacher evaluations, implementing policies and procedures, covering teachers due to the lack of substitutes, working with students regarding discipline, conducting lockdown drills, and attending meetings for special education consumes an enormous amount of time. Safety of students is imperative, but the initiatives to keep students safe can also create an environment that makes people feel unwelcomed. Parents must buzz in to the school, present identification, and wait in the front office for their child. Even if a parent is a guest speaker, they need to be escorted to a classroom. Providing a safe and welcoming school environment is a delicate balance. Obtaining clearances to volunteer is not only time consuming, but it also costs money. The cost alone can prevent parents from being able to volunteer. Principals need to think creatively to implement volunteer opportunities that may not require parents to get clearances.

This study explored middle level principals' parent involvement practices. The findings can assist current middle level principals in developing practices that best meet his or her school community needs. Involving parents is imperative to developing well-rounded students who are successful beyond graduation.

APPENDIX A

PERMISSION TO USE SURVEY

3-19-15
To: Tracie Michalowski
From: Joyce Epstein
Re: Permission

Thank you for your note. I am glad to know of your interest in research on school, family, and community partnerships, and your planned dissertation at the University of Pittsburgh.

You are correct that in most middle schools, parent involvement is still limited. This is not the case, however, among middle schools in our National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS). See books of Promising Partnership Practices on our website, www.partnershipschools.org in the section Success Stories. You can search on Middle Schools in each book that is available.

Please note the following about our available surveys and our inventories (like the *Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships*). You certainly have permission to use or adapt our instruments, whichever you decide to use.

All that we ask is that you provide full reference on the surveys and in your reports/bibliographies so that your readers will know where the surveys originated.

 SURVEYS

We have surveys from our Center for the elementary and middle grades, and others for high school.

 For your topic (middle level), you will find information about the surveys that we offer on our website, www.partnershipschools.org in the section **Publications and Products. The surveys include:**

Elementary/middle level surveys:

Sheldon, S. B. & Epstein, J. L. (2007). ***Parent Survey on Family and Community Involvement in the Elementary and Middle Grades***. Baltimore: Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships, Johns Hopkins University.

Sheldon, S. B. & Epstein, J. L. (2007). ***Student Survey on Family and Community Involvement in the Elementary and Middle Grades***. Baltimore: Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships, Johns Hopkins University.

Epstein, J. L. & Salinas, K. C. (1993) ***Surveys and Summaries: Questionnaires for Teachers and Parents in the Elementary and Middle Grades***. Baltimore: Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships, Johns Hopkins University.

Click on the CHART that describes the various surveys that are available and their scales. The 1993 and 2007 parent questionnaires cover some different measures. Print the ORDER FORM to obtain the survey that you want.

INVENTORIES

There are inventories based on the six types of involvement in chapters 5 and 9 of our handbook:

Epstein, J. L. et al. (2009). *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action, third edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

The inventories were designed as "team activities" to assess progress by schools' Action Teams for Partnerships that are developing and improving their programs of family and community involvement using our framework of six types of involvement. The inventories were not designed for individual reports in large samples. Thus, we do not have reliability statistics on this measure.

Some students have used the inventories (particularly the *Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships* in Chapter 9 of the *Handbook*) with individuals in their dissertations, but I do not yet have information on the results of these studies. Based on our other surveys, it is likely that the six scales in the *Measure* will have high internal reliability (Cronbach's Alpha). The items in the *Measure* were selected because of consistent patterns found in other surveys and in field studies on the six types of involvement. If you use the *Measure* in your study, you must use a statistical program (such as SPSS-Scale) to check the reliability statistics for your study sample

Best of luck with your project.

Joyce L. Epstein, Ph.D.
Director, Center on School, Family, and
Community Partnerships and National Network of
Partnership Schools (NNPS)
Research Professor of Sociology and Education
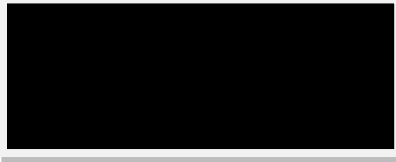
From: Tracie ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮
Sent: Saturday, March 07, 2015 1:37 PM
To: Joyce Epstein
Subject: Permission

Good afternoon Dr. Epstein,

My name is Tracie Michalowski, and I am currently working on my dissertation. I am a student at the University of Pittsburgh.

As a teacher, one of my favorite things was parent-teacher conferences. I loved speaking with parents and hearing their perspectives on education. I wanted the ability to work with students, teachers, and parents which lead me into administration. As an assistant principal at a middle school, I have found parent involvement to be limited, and at times not embraced by all administrators. I enjoy parents and believe their perspective of the school only enhances what I can do as an administrator to improve the school environment. This is why I decided to study parent involvement at the middle level. As I began researching, your work flourished to the top of my interests and inspired me to continue moving forward with this topic.

After several attempts to create my own survey reflecting your typologies, I am not close to a solid survey. I want to move forward, and I believe the best way to do this is by possibly tweaking an existing survey.

Therefore, I am asking permission to use and or revise the survey, Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships. At this time, the open-ended questions would not be used. In addition, I would also like to reword several questions to better reflect technology used in the schools for things like communication.

I realize several authors developed the survey, so I am not sure if you allow me, if I also need to contact the remaining authors.

I appreciate the consideration to use the survey, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully,

Tracie Michalowski

Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships

Karen Clark Salinas, Joyce L. Epstein, & Mavis G. Sanders, Johns Hopkins University,
Deborah Davis & Inge Douglas, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

This instrument is designed to measure how your school is reaching out to involve parents, community members, and students in a meaningful manner. The measure is based on the framework of six types of involvement developed by Epstein (1995). At this time, your school may conduct all, some, or none of the activities or approaches listed. Not every activity is appropriate at every grade level. The selected items show that your school is meeting challenges to involve all families in many different ways that will improve the school climate, strengthen families, and increase student success in school. Your school may be conducting other activities for each type of involvement. These may be added and rated to account for all major partnership practices that your school presently conducts.

> **Directions:** Carefully examine the scoring rubric below before rating your school on the six types of involvement. As you review each item, please circle the response that comes closest to describing your school. A score of 4 or 5 indicates that the activity or approach is strong and prominent. A score of 1,2, or 3 indicates that the activity is not yet part of the school's program, or needs improvement. The results provide information on the strength of current practices of partnership, and insights about possible future directions or needed improvements in your school's partnership program.

Scoring Rubric

1 – **Not Occurring:** Strategy does not happen at our school.

2 – **Rarely:** Occurs in only one or two classes. Receives isolated use or little time. Clearly not emphasized in this school's parental involvement plan.

3 – **Occasionally:** Occurs in some classes. Receives minimal or modest time or emphasis across grades. Not a prevalent component of this school's parental involvement plan.

4 – **Frequently:** Occurs in many but not all classes/grade levels. Receives substantive time and emphasis. A prevalent component of this school's parental involvement plan.

5 – **Extensively:** Occurs in most or all classes/grade levels. Receives substantive time and emphasis A highly prevalent component of this school's parental involvement plan.

I. PARENTING: Help all families establish home environments to support children as students.

Our School:	Rating				
	Not Occurring	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Extensively
1. Conducts workshops or provides information for parents on child development	1	2	3	4	5
2. Provides information, training, and assistance to all families who want it or who need it, not just to the few who can attend workshops or meetings at the school building.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Produces information for families that is clear, usable, and linked to children's success in school	1	2	3	4	5
4. Asks families for information about children's goals, strengths & talents.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Sponsors home visiting programs or neighborhood meetings to help families understand schools & to help schools to understand families.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Provides families with information/training on developing home conditions or environments that support learning	1	2	3	4	5
7. Respects the different cultures represented in our student population.	1	2	3	4	5
Other types of activities _____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5

II. COMMUNICATIONS: Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress.

Our School:	Rating				
	Not Occurring	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Extensively
1. Reviews the readability, clarity, form, and frequency of all memos, notices, and other print and non-print communications.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Develops communication for parents who do not speak English well, do not read well, or need large type.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Establishes clear two-way channels for communications from home to school and from school to home.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Conducts a formal conference with every parent at least once a year	1	2	3	4	5
5. Conducts an annual survey for families to share information and concerns about student needs & reactions to school programs, and their satisfaction with their involvement in school.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Conducts an orientation for new parents.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Sends home folders of student work weekly or monthly for parent review and comment.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Provides clear information about the curriculum, assessments, and achievement levels and report cards.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Contacts families of students having academic or behavior problems.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Develops school's plan and program of family and community involvement with input from educators, parents, and others.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Trains teachers, staff and principals on the value and utility of contributions of parents and ways to build ties between school and home.	1	2	3	4	5

Our School:	Rating				
	Not Occurring	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Extensively
12. Builds policies that encourage all teachers to communicate frequently with parents about their curriculum plans, expectations for homework, and how parents can help.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Produces a regular school newsletter with up-to-date information about the school, special events, organizations, meetings, and parenting tips.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Provides written communication in the language of the parents.	1	2	3	4	5
Other types of activities _____	1	2	3	4	5

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III. VOLUNTEERING: Recruit and organize parent help and support.

Our School:	Rating				
	Not Occurring	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Extensively
1. Conducts an annual survey to identify interests, talents, and availability of parent volunteers, in order to match their skills/talents with school and classroom needs.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Provides a parent/family room for volunteers and family members to work, meet, and access resources about parenting, childcare, tutoring, and other things that effect their children.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Creates flexible volunteering and school events schedules, enabling parents who work to participate.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Trains volunteers so they use their time productively.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Recognizes volunteers for their time and efforts.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Schedules school events at different times during the day and evening so that all families can attend some throughout the year.	1	2	3	4	5

Our School:	Rating				
	Not Occurring	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Extensively
7. Reduces barriers to parent participation by providing transportation, childcare, flexible schedules, and addresses the needs of English language learners.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Encourages families and the community to be involved with the school in a variety of ways (assisting in classroom, giving talks, monitoring halls, leading activities, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Other types of activities _____	1	2	3	4	5

IV. LEARNING AT HOME: Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.

Our School:	Rating				
	Not Occurring	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Extensively
1. Provides information to families on how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Provides ongoing and specific information to parents on how to assist students with skills that they need to improve.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Makes parents aware of the importance of reading at home, and asks parents to listen to their child read or read aloud with their child.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Assists families in helping students set academic goals, select courses, and programs.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Schedules regular interactive homework that requires students to demonstrate and discuss what they are learning with a family member.	1	2	3	4	5

Our School:	Rating				
	Not Occurring	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Extensively
Other types of activities _____	1	2	3	4	5

V. DECISIONMAKING: Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.

Our School:	Rating				
	Not Occurring	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Extensively
1. Has active PTA, PTO, or other parent organization.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Includes parent representatives on the school's advisory council, improvement team, or other committees.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Has parents represented on district-level advisory council and committees.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Involves parents in an organized, ongoing, and timely way in the planning, review, and improvement of programs.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Involves parents in revising the school/district curricula.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Includes parent leaders from all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other group in the school.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Develops formal networks to link all families with their parent representatives.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Includes students (along with parents) in decision-making groups.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Deals with conflict openly and respectfully.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Asks involved parents to make contact with parents who are less involved to solicit their ideas, and report back to them.	1	2	3	4	5

Our School:	Rating				
	Not Occurring	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Extensively
Other types of activities _____	1	2	3	4	5

VI. COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY: Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

Our School:	Rating				
	Not Occurring	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Extensively
1. Provides a community resource directory for parents and students with information on community services, programs, and agencies.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Involves families in locating and utilizing community resources.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Works with local businesses, industries, and community organizations on programs to enhance student skills and learning.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Provides "one-stop" shopping for family services through partnership of school, counseling, health, recreation, job training, and other agencies.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Opens its building for use by the community after school hours	1	2	3	4	5
6. Offers after-school programs for students with support from community businesses, agencies, and volunteers	1	2	3	4	5
7. Solves turf problems of responsibilities, funds, staff, and locations for collaborative activities to occur	1	2	3	4	5
8. Utilizes community resources, such as businesses, libraries, parks, and museums to enhance the learning environment.	1	2	3	4	5
Other types of activities _____	1	2	3	4	5

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A. What major factors have contributed to the success of your school's family and community involvement efforts?

B. What major factors have limited the success of your school's family and community involvement efforts?

C. What is one of your school's major goals for improving it's program of school, family, and community partnerships over the next three years?

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Note: For information on the National Network of Partnership Schools at John Hopkins University, visit the Network's Website: www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000
For information about NWREL's services, call 1-800-547-6339 ext.568, or access the Website at www.nwrel.org

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
8

NATIONAL NETWORK OF PARTNERSHIP SCHOOLS
Johns Hopkins University

Figure 13. Original survey

APPENDIX C

I. PARENTING		
As principal, I ensure our school:		
1. Conduct presentations to provide information to parents on middle school adolescent development.	Use/Adapt-Conducts workshops or provides information for parents on middle school students' development.	Epstein, 1995; Epstein, et al., 2002
2. Provides information, training, and assistance to all families who want it or need it, not just to those who can attend workshops or meetings at the school building.	Do not use as similar to #6 in volunteering.	
3. Produces information for families that is clear, useable, and linked to children's success in school.	Do not use as professionals would do this.	
4. Asks families for information about children's goals, strengths and talents.	Use from original survey	Epstein, et al., 2002
5. Sponsors home visiting programs or neighborhood meetings to help families understand schools and to help schools understand families.	Use/Adapt- Sponsors meetings or presentations to help build family school collaboration.	Epstein, 1995; Epstein, et al., 2002
6. Provides families with information/training on developing home conditions or environments that support learning.	Use from original survey	Epstein, et al., 2002
7. Respects the different cultures in our population	Use/Adapt-Respects the different cultures in our school population and celebrates diversity through school activities and/or assemblies.	Epstein, 1995; Epstein, et al., 2002; Yap, K.O & Enocki, D., 1995
Other types of activities	I do not want to include open-ended	

II. COMMUNICATIONS		
As principal, I ensure our school:		
1. Reviews the readability, clarity, form, and frequency of all memos and notices print and non-print communications.	Do not use as professionals would do this daily.	
2. Develops communication for parents who do not speak English well, do not read well, or need large type.	Use/Adapt-Use resources when needed to develop communication for parents who may have a barrier keeping them from understanding "standard communication" (access to a computer, language).	Epstein, 1995; Epstein, et al., 2002; Yap, K.O & Enocki, D., 1995
3. Establishes clear two-way channels of communication from home to school and from school to home.	Use/Adapt- Expect teachers to respond to email/phone call from a parent within 24-48 hrs.	Epstein, 1995; Epstein, et al., 2002; Heath, D., Maghrabi, R., & Carr, N., 2015; Thompson, B. C., Mazer, J. P., & Grady, E. F., 2015
4. Conducts a formal conference with parents at least once a year.	Use/Adapt- Encourages a formal conferences with parents at least once a year.	Epstein, 1995; Epstein, et al., 2002
5. Conducts an annual survey for families to share information and concerns about students' needs and reactions to school programs and their satisfaction with the school environment in school.	Do not use Similar to #1in Volunteering	
6. Conducts an orientation for new families including students and parents.	Use from original survey	Epstein, et al., 2002
7. Sends home folders or student work weekly or monthly for parent review of comments.	Do not use Many things online—not as appropriate for middle school	
8. Provides clear information about the curriculum, assessments, achievement levels and report cards.	Use/Adapt-Empowers teachers to provide information about curriculum, assessments, achievement levels, and grades to parents throughout the school year.	Epstein, 1995; Epstein, et al., 2002
9. Contacts families of students having academic or behavior problems.	Do not use Part of teacher responsibility also addressed in #12	
10. Develops school's plan and program of family and community involvement with input from educators, parents, and others.	Do not use Similar to #30 in Decision Making	
11. Trains teachers, staff, and principals on the value and utility of contributions of parents and ways to build ties between school and home.	Use/Adapt-Trains teachers and staff on the value the contributions of parents by suggesting ways build ties between school and home.	Epstein, 1995; Epstein, et al., 2002
12. Builds policies that encourage all teachers to communicate frequently with parents about their curriculum plans, expectations for homework, and how parents can help.	Use/Adapt-Mandates teacher's websites have up-to-date information and resources for parents regarding how they can help their child while at home.	Epstein, et al., 2002; Heath, D., Maghrabi, R., & Carr, N., 2015; Thompson, B. C., Mazer, J. P., & Grady, E. F., 2015
13. Produces a regular school newsletter with up-to-date information about the school, special events, organizations, meetings and parenting tips.	Do not use Websites are now available	

14. Provides written communication in the language of the parents.	Do not use Similar to #2 in Communication	
Other types of activities	I do not want to include open-ended	

III. VOLUNTEERING		
As principal, I ensure our school:		
1. Conducts an annual survey to identify interest, talents, and availability of parent volunteers, in order to match their skills/talents with school and classroom needs.	Use from original survey.	Epstein, 1995; Epstein, et al., 2002
2. Provides a parent/family room for volunteers and family members to work, meet, and access resources about parenting, childcare, tutoring, and other things that affect their children.	Use/Adapt- Communicate the clearances needed for parents to volunteer.	Epstein, 1995; Epstein, et al., 2002
3. Creates flexible volunteering and school events schedules, enabling parents who work to participate.	Do not use as similar to #6 in Volunteering.	
4. Trains volunteers so they use their time productively.	Do not use since this is done by person in charge of event, not necessarily principal.	
5. Recognizes volunteers for their time and efforts.	Use/Adapt-Recognize volunteers for their time and efforts in a formal setting at least once a year (breakfast, lunch, assembly).	Epstein, 1995; Epstein, et al., 2002; Yap, K.O & Enocki, D., 1995
6. Schedules school events at different times during the day and evening so that all families can attend some throughout the year.	Use from original survey.	Epstein, 1995; Epstein, et al., 2002; Yap, K.O & Enocki, D., 1995
7. Reduces barriers to participation by providing transportation, childcare, flexible schedules and addresses the needs of English language learners.	Do not use as this is addressed in #6 Volunteering and in the section with Communication.	
8. Encourages families and the community to be involved with school in a variety of ways (assisting in classroom, giving talks, monitoring halls, leading activities, etc.)	Use from original survey.	Epstein, 1995; Epstein, et al., 2002; Yap, K.O & Enocki, D., 1995
Other types of activities	I do not want to include open-ended	

IV. LEARNING AT HOME		
As principal, I ensure our school:		
1. Provides information to families on how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home.	Use from original survey.	Epstein, et al., 2002
2. Provides ongoing and specific information on how to assist students with skills that they need to improve.	Use from original survey.	Epstein, et al., 2002
3. Makes parents aware of the importance of reading at home, and asks parents to listen to their child read or real aloud with their child.	Adapt- Supports families to assist in building skills at home in math and reading by providing resources like online textbooks or websites.	Epstein, 1995; Epstein, et al., 2002; Yap, K.O & Enocki, D., 1995
4. Assists families in helping students set academic goals, select courses, and programs.	Use from original survey.	Epstein, et al., 2002
5. Schedules regular interactive homework that requires students to demonstrate and discuss what they are learning at home with a family member.	Use/Adapt -Encourages teachers to provide interactive homework that requires students to demonstrate and discuss what they are learning at home with a family member.	Epstein, 1995; Epstein, et al., 2002; Yap, K.O & Enocki, D., 1995
Other types of activities	I do not want to include open-ended	

V. DECISION MAKING		
As principal, I ensure our school:		
1. Has an active PTA, PTO, or other parent organization.	Use/Adapt- Hold monthly PTA, PTO, or other parent organization meetings.	Epstein, 1995; Epstein, et al., 2002; Yap, K.O & Enocki, D., 1995
2. Includes parent representatives on the school's advisory council, improvement team, or other committees.	Do not use as similar to #4 in Decision Making.	
3. Has parents represented on district level advisory council committees and school committees to help improve programs.	Do not use as similar to #4 in Decision Making.	
4. Involves parents in an organized, ongoing, and timely way in the planning, review, and improvement of programs.	Use/Adapt- Involves parents in an organized manner to serve on committees or advisory councils to assist in improving school programs.	Epstein, 1995; Epstein, et al., 2002;
5. Involves parents in revising the school/district curricula.	Use/Adapt- Follows a formal process to respect parent concerns or requests to opt out of specific portions of curricula that they deem inappropriate based on cultural and/or religious beliefs.	Epstein, 1995; Epstein, et al., 2002
6. Includes parent leaders from all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic and other groups in the school	Do not use as schools may encourage everyone, but you can't control who does/does not decide to be a leader	
7. Develops formal networks to link all families with their parent representatives.	Do not use as there might not be formal networks developed, and similar to #10 in Decision Making.	
8. Includes students (along with parents) in decision-making groups.	Do not use as similar to #4 in Decision Making.	

9. Deals with conflict openly and respectfully.	Use from original survey.	Epstein, et al., 2002
10. Asks involved parents to make contact with parents who are less involved to solicit their ideas, and report back to them.	Use from original survey.	Epstein, et al., 2002
Other types of activities	I do not want to include open-ended	

VI. COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY		
As principal, I ensure our school:		
1. Provides a community resource directory for parents and students with information on community services, programs, and agencies.	Use/Adapt- Offers support to families who may not be able to cover school community activities such as school sponsored sports, filed trips, or after school activities.	Epstein, 1995; Epstein, et al., 2002;
2. Involves families in locating and utilizing community resources.	Use from original survey.	Epstein, et al., 2002
3. Works with local businesses, industries, and community organizations on programs to enhance student skills and learning.	Do not use as similar to #8 in Collaborating with the Community.	Epstein, 1995; Epstein, et al., 2002; Yap, K.O & Enocki, D., 1995
4. Provides "one stop" shopping for family services through partnership of school, counseling, health, recreation, job training, and other agencies.	Use from original survey.	Epstein, et al., 2002;
5. Open its building for use by the community after school hours.	Use/Adapt- Encourages the use of the school building by the community during after school hours.	Epstein, 1995; Epstein, et al., 2002
6. Offers after-school programs for students with support from community businesses, agencies, and volunteers.	Do not use as after school programs may not be as common at middle level due to clubs, activities, sports. . Principals may not have a say in this offering.	
7. Solves turf problems of responsibilities, funds, staff, and locations for collaborative activities to occur.	Do not use	Epstein, 1995; Epstein, et al., 2002; Yap, K.O & Enocki, D., 1995
8. Utilizes community resources, such as businesses, libraries, parks, and museums, to enhance the learning environment.	Use from original survey.	Epstein, et al., 2002
Other types of activities	I do not want to include open-ended	

Figure 14. Modified survey

APPENDIX D

1-Not Occurring	Does not happen in our school
2-Rarely	Not emphasized
3-Occasionally	Receives minimal ore modest emphasis
4-Frequently	Prevalent, high emphasis
5-Extensively	Highly prevalent, receives substantive emphasis

1. Informed consent
2. Accepting informed consent

I. PARENTING					
As principal, I:	Not Occurring	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Extensively
3. Conduct workshops or provide information for parents on middle school adolescent development.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Require teachers to ask families for information about children's goals, strengths, and talents.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Sponsor meetings to help build family /school collaboration.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Provide families with information/training on developing home conditions or environments that support learning.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Ensure the school community respects the different cultures in our school population and celebrates diversity through school activities and/or assemblies.	1	2	3	4	5

II. COMMUNICATIONS					
As principal, I:	Not Occurring	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Extensively
8. Use resources when needed to develop communication for parents who may have a barrier keeping them from understanding "standard communication" (access to a computer, language).	1	2	3	4	5
9. Expect teachers to respond to email/phone calls from a parent within 24 hrs.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Require teachers to hold formal conferences with parents at least once a year.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Conduct an orientation for new families including students and parents.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Empower teachers to provide information about curriculum, assessments, achievement levels, and grades to parents throughout the school year.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Train teachers and staff on the value the contributions of parents by suggesting ways build ties between school and home.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Mandate teachers' websites to have up-to-date informatioinf ormation and resources for parents regarding how they can help their child while at home.	1	2	3	4	5

III. VOLUNTEERING					
As principal, I:	Not Occurring	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Extensively
15. Conduct an annual survey to identify interest, talents, and availability of parent volunteers, in order to match their skills/talents with school and classroom needs.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Communicate the process to gain needed clearances in order for parents to volunteer.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Recognize volunteers for their time and efforts in a formal setting at least once a year (breakfast, lunch, assembly).	1	2	3	4	5
18. Schedule school events at different times during the day and evening so that all families can attend some throughout the year.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Encourage parents to be involved with the school in a variety of ways (assisting in classrooms, giving talks, monitoring halls, leading activities, etc.) by formally inviting them through emails and/or phone calls.	1	2	3	4	5

IV. LEARNING AT HOME					
As principal, I:	Not Occurring	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Extensively
20. Provide information to families on how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Require teachers to assist parents with specific information about how to assist their child at home with study and/or organizational skills.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Require teachers to offer resources to families (outside of the curriculum resources) to build skills in content areas.	1	2	3	4	5
23. Assist families in helping students set academic goals, select courses, and programs.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Encourage teachers to provide interactive homework that requires students to demonstrate and discuss what they are learning at home with a family member.	1	2	3	4	5

V. DECISION MAKING					
As principal, I:	Not Occurring	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Extensively
25. Hold monthly PTA, PTO, or other parent organization meetings.	1	2	3	4	5
26. Involve parents in an organized manner to serve on committees or advisory councils to assist in improving school programs	1	2	3	4	5
27. Follow a formal process to respect parent concerns or requests to opt out of specific portions of curricula that they deem inappropriate based on cultural and/or religious beliefs.	1	2	3	4	5
28. Deal with conflict openly and respectfully.	1	2	3	4	5
29. Ask involved parents to make contact with parents who are less involved to solicit their ideas and report back to them.	1	2	3	4	5

VI. COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY					
As principal, I:	Not Occurring	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Extensively
30. Have a system in place to offer financial support to families who may not be able to cover school community activities such as school sponsored sports, filed trips, or after school activities.	1	2	3	4	5
31. Involve families in locating and utilizing community resources.	1	2	3	4	5
32. Provide "one stop" shopping for family services through partnership of school, counseling, health, recreation, job training, and other agencies.	1	2	3	4	5
33. Encourage the use of the school building by the community during after school hours.	1	2	3	4	5
34. Encourage teachers to utilize community resources, such as businesses, libraries, parks, and museums, to enhance the learning environment.	1	2	3	4	5

35. Years as a middle school principal?
36. Years in current position?
37 Are you?   Male   Female
38. Describe your school population receiving free and/or reduced lunch?   Less than 20%   21%-40%   41%-60%   61% or higher
39. Which best describes the geographical location of your school?   Suburban   Rural   Urban

Figure 15. Final survey

APPENDIX E

PERMISSION PAMLE

Dear Tracie:

PAMLE will be excited to take part in this survey. We will also be interested in making your dissertation available to our members once it is completed, with your permission of course.

You will need to provide me an introduction letter that will go out to our members explaining the dissertation and the survey. Once we review that letter we will distribute to our membership and those interested in taking the survey will complete it on line.

Additionally, you may want to consider making a presentation concerning your research at our State Conference. I have attached a call for presenter application for you to complete if willing to present.

Best wishes and I will wait to receive the letter that we will send to our membership.

Have a great day.

Executive Director
Pennsylvania Association for Middle Level Education

"Promoting Best Practices for Middle Level Education."

From: Tracie
Date: Oct 16, 2016 2:24:45 PM
Subject: Fwd: Dissertation Work
To: ██████████████

Hi ██████████

I want to clarify if I give the link to my survey to PAMLE ████████████████, will you send it to the listed principals since you have email addresses? Do I take care of sending the survey, but I can include a statement saying they are receiving it as members of PAMLE because we are working together? I just want to make sure I am following the correct guidelines from PAMLE. I have no problem retrieving the emails on my own if it is easier than you all sending it. Please let me know.

Tracie

On Oct 18, 2016, at 9:00 AM, ████████████████████████████████

Paul will send you the e-mails and you can forward your information with a statement "You are receiving this information as members of PAMLE. This is a joint undertaking." Or something to that effect.

Len

From: Tracie ████████████████████████
Sent: Sunday, September 27, 2015 12:47 PM
To: ████████████████████
Subject: Dissertation Work

Good afternoon ██████████

My name is Tracie Michalowski, and I am currently completing my dissertation at the University of Pittsburgh. I am the assistant principal at Marshal Middle School in the North Allegheny school district. I have worked in middle level education for 18 years. Therefore, my dissertation has focused on middle level principal's practices of parent involvement.

As a member of PAMLE, I wanted to ask about sending my survey to the other members. I am not sure if this is allowable, but it seems my area of focus fits with the mission of the PAMLE organization. The survey has been adapted from Joyce Epstein's existing survey. The survey would be electronic with all corresponding documents from the University of Pittsburgh and permission from Joyce Epstein. I believe this would be a survey of high interest to members since it focuses on middle level principal practices, and the results of the survey could possibly assist principals in increasing parent involvement at the middle level. I believe the overall time commitment to complete the survey would be approximately 15 minutes.

Please let me know if this is a possibility. Your time is appreciated.

Respectfully,

Tracie Michalowski

APPENDIX F

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Executive Director of Pennsylvania Association of Middle Level Education

To: ███████████ Executive Director of PAMLE

From: Tracie V. Michalowski
University of Pittsburgh
School of Education

Date: December 10, 2016

As a doctoral candidate at the University of Pittsburgh, I am studying middle school principals' practices of parent involvement based of Joyce Epstein's six typologies which include: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. I am seeking approval to send PAMLE members in the Western Region my survey to gain insight into current parent involvement practices and how they align to Epstein's typology.

Participation in this study is voluntary and confidentiality will be maintained via the University of Pittsburgh's *Qualtrics Survey System.* At any time, a participant can choose to withdraw or not participate in the study. There are no foreseeable risks to participants. Benefits include reflecting on one's professional parent involvement practices while answering the survey questions.

In order to respect participants' time, the survey will only take approximately 15 minutes. Please click the following link to review the survey:

If you have any questions about this process, I can be contacted at (412) 657-6201 or email Tvm2@pitt.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Tracie Michalowski
Doctoral Student
University of Pittsburgh

APPENDIX G

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDY

To: PAMLE Western Region Member Middle Level Principal or Middle School Principal in   the
        Western Region

From: Tracie V. Michalowski
        University of Pittsburgh
        School of Education

Date:

Dear Middle Level Principal

My name is Tracie Michalowski, and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Pittsburgh. I am studying middle school principals' practices of parent involvement based of Joyce Epstein's six typologies which include: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. This research study explores middle level principal's practices to gain insight as to how and if current practices align to Epstein's typology. You are being asked to participate because you are either a member of PAMLE or a middle school leader in a school located in the Western Region of Pennsylvania.

Participation in this study is voluntary and confidentiality will be maintained via the University of Pittsburgh's *Qualtrics Survey System.* At any time, a participant can choose to withdraw or not participate in the study. There are no foreseeable risks to participants. Benefits include reflecting on one's professional parent involvement practices while answering the survey questions. In addition, results can be shared with you upon request. This study is supported by the Pennsylvania Association for Middle Level Education (PAMLE).

In order to respect your time, the survey takes approximately 15 minutes. Please click the following link to begin the survey:

If you have any questions about this process, I can be contacted at (412) 657-6201 or email Tvm2@pitt.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,
Tracie Michalowski
Doctoral Student
University of Pittsburgh

PARTICIPANT FOLLOW UP

To: PAMLE Western Region Member Middle Level Principal or Middle School Principal in the
        Western Region

From: Tracie V. Michalowski
        University of Pittsburgh
        School of Education
Date:

Dear Middle School Principal,

I recently contacted you via email requesting your participation in an online survey regarding middle school principals' practices of parent involvement based of Joyce Epstein's six typologies which include: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. This research study explores middle level principals' practices to gain insight as to how and if current practices align to Epstein's typology.

Your feedback as a middle school principal is valuable, and I am excited to have your expertise reflected in this study. I would be very appreciative of your time to respond to the survey. The time commitment is minimal and should take no more than 15 minutes.

Please click the following link to take the survey:

You participation and professional insight is appreciated.

If you have any questions about this process, I can be contacted at (412) 657-6201 or email Tvm2@pitt.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Tracie Michalowski
Doctoral Student
University of Pittsburgh

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