2017

Parental Involvement: Importance, Reality and Application

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PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT:

IMPORTANCE, REALITY AND APPLICATION

A MASTER'S THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

OF BETHEL UNIVERSITY

BY

PAUL D. STILES

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

December 2017

BETHEL UNIVERSITY

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December 2017

APPROVED

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Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the overwhelming support of people I have had the pleasure of working and interacting with along on my journey to become a teacher. Thank you to my mother for her support and guidance. Although I chose my own path (she is also a math teacher), her modeling and guidance helped me understand what I wanted to do with my life. Thank you to my professors at Bethel University who helped to develop my passion to not only become a teacher, but to strive to continually improve. Special thanks to Lisa Silmser who offered guidance, support and encouragement throughout the thesis writing process. Thank you also to my cooperating teachers, Juleen Thom and Tim Lloyd, for allowing me into their classrooms and helping to show me what it takes to be a successful teacher.

Without the continued encouragement of my wife (Beth) and two children (Elijah and Isaac), this paper might still be on my to-do-list. When I was discouraged and did not feel confident in undertaking this massive writing initiative, my wife reminded me of what I was capable of and her encouragement and support was exceptional. I missed a lot of soccer, hockey and basketball practices and games while pursuing the writing of this paper. Thank you Elijah and Isaac for your understanding and providing your detailed descriptions of what I missed in ways that only the two of you can. It was as if I never missed an event and I am grateful for that.

God gives everyone in life a purpose. I am grateful that I listened to His calling and chose my career accordingly. He led me in a number of different directions early on in my professional career so that I could see definitively where I needed to go. I am thankful for the lessons learned along the way. He has been with me every step in my journey.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6.

Abstract

Parents have always been actively involved in their child's education. As researchers continue to explore factors that drive academic success, parental involvement has emerged as a factor that promotes positive outcomes. Just how they are involved and why they become involved is something that researchers continue to examine. However, regardless of the research conclusions on parental involvement, parental involvement initiatives continue to be implemented at a surprisingly low rate. This paper examines modes of parental involvement, barriers to parental involvement implementation and ways to minimize barriers while maximizing parental involvement effectiveness.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Student achievement in school and the factors that drive that success are foundational elements in much of educational research. Researchers are constantly exploring what variables positively affect student achievement. "No topic about school improvement has created more rhetoric than parental involvement" (Epstein, 2010, p. 3). The question of what parental involvement is continues to be examined within the educational research.

What is Parental Involvement?

Traditionally, parental involvement includes coordinated activities in the school and at home (Bower & Griffin, 2011). This definition has been found to be too broad when considering the myriad of influences families and schools have on parental involvement. Research continues to suggest that schools need to better develop a better overall framework of what parental involvement is to maximize its inclusiveness (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006). The next portion of this literature review will examine two overall frameworks that have been widely accepted within the academic community.

Epstein's Model: Six Types of Involvement

Epstein (2010) has developed a framework of parental involvement that attempts to translate theory, research and policy into action. Epstein's model of parental involvement includes six types of involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community.

The term *parenting*, in Epstein's model, refers to schools helping establish a home environment that is supportive to children as students. Suggested parental involvement activities to affect parenting include workshops, computerized phone messages on parenting and child-

rearing, parent education courses, home visits and programs to assist with health and nutrition. The benefits Epstein (2010) articulates for parents is that they will have a greater understanding and be more confident about parenting and feel more supported from the school. Teachers will also benefit by having a greater understanding and appreciation for their students' families background, culture, concerns and academic goals.

Communicating is all about the design of effective means of communication from schools to parents about school programs and their child's progress. This type of involvement may include conferences, language translators, regular flyers sent home with students, regular reporting on academic progress, clear information on courses and programs offered at the school, and information offered on school policies and programs. Students and parents benefit from an increased awareness on their academic progress, being able to make informed decisions when signing up for courses, and being able to respond more efficiently to any issues that may arise (academically and behaviorally). Teachers benefit creating an awareness around their own ability to communicate effectively, creating a greater appreciation for the parent network, and increasing their understanding on what is important for families to learn more about.

Volunteering centers around school efforts to recruit and organize parental involvement in school programs. A couple of ways Epstein (2010) suggests to achieve this mode of parental involvement is by creating volunteer programs that encourage parents participation in schools. Benefits parents are likely to realize with this approach is a greater understanding of what a teacher's job entails, self-confidence about their ability to work with schools, and an awareness that families are welcome and valued at school. Teachers benefit by becoming more aware of parent's talents and interests related to school and their child, and by having greater individual attention to students (because there are more volunteers to interact with students).

Teachers influence *learning at home* by providing critical information to families about how they can support their child's learning. This may include communicating to parents the skills needed to support their child on curriculum, homework policies and how to monitor progress, calendars that showcase learning targets and important dates (tests, homework due dates), learning opportunities outside of the regular classroom (summer or after school programs), and information on how families can set goals for each school year. As a result of this communication, Epstein (2010) argues that parents will become more aware of how they can support, encourage, and help their child at home. Teachers may benefit by better design of homework assignments, greater respect for family time, and report a higher overall satisfaction with parent involvement and support.

Including parents in school decisions and creating parent leaders, broadly defines Epstein's (2010) decision-making parental involvement type. *Decision-making* includes activities like encouraging active participation in parent-teacher organizations, providing information on school or local elections for school representatives, or linking parents to a network of other parent representatives. Parents benefit from decision-making by having a voice into policies that affect their child's education, greater sense of ownership of the school, and by sharing experiences and connections with other families. In turn, teachers become more aware of parent's perspectives on policy development and decisions.

The final type of parental involvement in Epstein's (2010) model centers around *collaborating with the community*. Epstein (2010) defines this as identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to strengthen schools. In action, some initiatives may include linking of community activities with school learning, service to the community via school sponsored events, and participation of alumni in school programs. Because of these

efforts, parents may increase their knowledge of local resources outside of the school that will help with their child's education. Teacher awareness on community resources that can be leveraged to support their classroom will also increase.

All of these six-types of parental involvement create "potential for schools, families, and communities to create caring educational environments" (Epstein, 2010, p. 392). It is this type of parental involvement framework that schools can leverage when designing school-based parental involvement initiatives.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler: Five Levels of Involvement

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) proposed an initial five level model of why parent's become involved in their child's learning. Since then, on-going research has been done on the effectiveness and transferability of this model to an applied setting of parental involvement. Based on these findings, Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler and Hoover-Dempsey (2005) revised their initial model. The following portion of this literature review will examine this revised model.

Walker et al. (2005) created a five level model of parental involvement to help explain why parents get involved and how their involvement improves student outcomes. The overarching goal of their model was to enhance parental involvement by explaining the process of why parents become involved in their child's education in the first place. The levels of involvement range from a parent's initial choice to become involved (level 1) through beneficial influence of parental involvement (level 5).

Level 1 of this model consists of factors that influence a parent's decision to initially become involved in their child's education. The factors include the parent's sense of

responsibility and self-efficacy (belief they can influence an outcome). This level also involves parent's perceptions on invitations (school or student-invites) to participate and their perceived time, energy, skills and knowledge.

The second level *(Level 2)* of this model describes how parents choose to become involved in their child's education. This can vary between families based on whether the parent chooses to become involved at school, in the home, or both. Regardless of the mode of involvement, level 2 activities are described by four specific types of activities: encouragement, modeling, reinforcement and instruction.

Level 3 of involvement incorporates student's perceptions of their parents at level 2. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) assert that families achieve level 3 of parental involvement only if the student perceives their parents actions in level 2. At level 2, parents encourage, model, reinforce and instruct on desired behaviors. At level 3, students need to translate these into attributes that lead to academic success.

Level 4 centers around a student's attributes favorable to achievement. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) highlight two factors that play a role: age of the child and the fit between a parent's actions and school expectations. The age of the child is important when developing appropriate involvement strategies and the actions of the parents need to be closely aligned with expected outcomes at school.

The fifth and final level *(Level 5)* of parental involvement asserts that parental involvement efforts (throughout the first four levels) will influence and predict desired student outcomes. If the school, parents and students can navigate effectively through the first four levels, there is a greater likelihood that benefits of parental involvement will be realized.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) recommend that these levels be considered within a broader adoption of "school policy and social values" (p. 35). These efforts should be grounded in the knowledge of why parents become involved in the first place.

Characteristics of Parental Involvement

Most researchers generally agree that parental involvement primarily involves a partnership between teachers and parents (Bower and Griffin, 2011). Therefore, parental involvement is not simply having parents actively engaged in their students' learning on their own. True parental involvement requires parents and teachers to actively engage and support one another in an effort to promote overall student achievement.

While there is continued debate on the ideal characteristics of parental involvement, this partnership is "characterized by varying levels of frequency, response effort and settings in which parental involvement efforts occur" (Sawyer, 2015, p. 172). This partnership recognizes that home, school and the community share the responsibility and are active participants in the process (Epstein, 2010). Specific examples of parental involvement at home include homework assistance (Culp, Schadle, Robinson & Culp, 2000), supporting academic development at home like reading (Fagan & Iglesias, 1999), helping a child to learn school readiness skills (Parker, Boak, Griffin, Ripple & Peay, 1999), library visits (Senechal & LeFevre, 2002) and much more. School based involvement can include parents helping with classroom activities (Marcon, 1999), attending open houses (Taylor & Machida, 1994), initiating contact with teachers, asking questions, information sharing (Ma, 1999) and much more.

History of Parental Involvement

The narrative of parental involvement has changed significantly over time. Before public schools came on the scene, the family was primarily responsible for the education of their children. This often took the form of education based on productive activities and trades important to the local community (Brittle, 1994). Parental involvement in setting was considered basic in nature; providing for their children's food, health, safety, shelter, clothing and well-being (Epstein, 1986).

The earliest form of public schools originated in England during the 14th century (Coleman, 1987). Supported financially by families, this new style of education began to replace the private (tutored) style that dominated the educational landscape beforehand. The role of the parent in this new setting was to send their boys off to a boarding school, thereby transferring the role of education from the family to an educational institution (Coleman, 1987). Prior to this, most of the learning centered on on-the-job training that would occur in close proximity of the household.

Within the last two centuries, the dominant economic activities in society began to shift from being primarily local to expanding more broadly across states, countries and even globally (Coleman, 1987). Men's jobs increasingly took them further from the farm, or neighborhood shop, into the office or factory. Based on this shift in economics, state-sponsored educational institutions began to be more prevalent beginning in the late 19th century and developed more broadly in the early 20th century.

The industrial effects of World War II brought form great technological and scientific changes. Television, for example, allowed information around the world to be broadcast directly

to children and families. This information was often counter to the attitudes, customs, and values the family was attempting to instill on their children. This significantly changed society's social structure and in turn altered the relationship between families and schools (Comer, 1986). Parents began feeling that their teachings were being overshadowed by the schools and the schools teachings were being less accepted by parents. All of these sudden changes hastened a decrease in trust between families and schools. Coordinated parental involvement efforts were needed to help minimize this effect.

Parental involvement has always played a central role in education and coordinated efforts to implement programs are not new. By 1956, volunteer programs were including parents in the classrooms to help with reading and language. In 1964, the Ford Foundation issued a grant to help promote parental involvement initiatives. These programs continued to see an increase in prevalence with 4.3 million parents and other citizens providing volunteer services in schools (MacDowell, 1989). The following portion of this literature review will examine government initiatives to promote parental involvement in schools.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act

One of the first and most far-reaching U.S. federal legislations affecting public and eligible private educational institutions was the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* of 1965. Signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson, this act was part of the so-called 'war on poverty'. Therefore, a primary focus of this act was to help minimize the achievement gap. In an effort to close this achievement gap, part of the legislation included funding provisions for programs that promoted parental involvement.

Goals 2000: Educate America Act

In 1994, *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* was signed by President Clinton. Developed in effort by the U.S. Congress, this act set high-reaching goals that challenged schools to do more to help students succeed. This act did not direct efforts of schools to achieve these goals, rather the language provided goals while leaving the responsibility of figuring how to achieve these goals up to the schools and communities. This act included many things including provisions on parental involvement; "By the year 2000, every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children." Government funding was provided to schools and communities that developed comprehensive reform plans and implementation strategies to meet the goals set forth, including parental involvement efforts.

No Child Left Behind

The U.S. Government continued to promote efforts to increase academic achievement for all students. The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* became law in 2002. Within the law, Title 1 focused on ensuring strong parental involvement within schools. The provisions of Title 1 stress shared accountability between schools and parents to promote high student achievement. Included among these provisions is expanded school choice, local development of parental involvement plans, and building parents' aptitude to help in their own child's academic achievement (Parental involvement: title 1, part A (non-regulatory guidance), 2004). To further promote this law, the government requires that all schools receiving Title 1 funding must have a written parental involvement policy that was developed, agreed upon by both parents and educators, and distributed to all parents and educators. The overarching goal of Title 1 is to help

ensure meaningful efforts to encourage and sustain parental involvement are in place within every school.

Every Student Succeeds Act

In 2015, *Every Student Succeeds Act* was signed into law. This law reauthorized the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* while adding elements from previous government initiatives that were deemed successful within the *No Child Left Behind Act*. Related to parental involvement, *Every Student Succeeds Act* added more specificity on how those reach out programs should look. To receive government funding, schools now had to have outreach programs to all parents and family members; previously, only parents were included. Additionally, all school-based parental involvement policies must reinforce more detailed expectations and objectives for meaningful parental involvement. Finally, the development of such policies were to include greater input from more sources than just educators and parents. The recommendations for policy development now included consultation and input from employers, business leaders, philanthropic organizations, or individuals with expertise in effectively engaging parents and families in education.

As demonstrated in this review, the government's role in providing guidance to schools on parental involvement continues to increase. Among this evolution is a more refined and prescriptive guidance on how to develop actionable policies that affect parental involvement.

Guiding Questions

The purpose of this literature review is to examine research-based findings on parental involvement. What does parental involvement look like? What are the potential benefits of parental involvement for students, parents, teachers and administrators? Does parental

involvement take a different shape depending on the type of student (IEP, disability, low income, ethnicity, etc.); or is it best implemented in a generalized fashion? What are the barriers to effective parental involvement? What can be done to overcome possible barriers? These questions will be explored within the body of this paper.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Parental involvement has long been considered a driver of student academic success on overall achievement. How to best engage parents and preferred modes of parental involvement initiatives, continues to be researched and debated among the intellectual community. While positive research findings exist, there is still not a consistent consensus on what parental involvement should look like and under what circumstances. This has led some researchers to conclude that because of this lack of congruency the rate of parental involvement in schools continues to be surprisingly low (Epstein, 2010). So this begs the question, with so much research showing student success with parental involvement initiatives, why is the rate of parental involvement so low?

In Chapter II of this literature review, the author will examine benefits of successful parental involvement initiatives, current parental involvement implementation rates, barriers to parental involvement implementation and strategies to overcome barriers and perceptions.

Research Strategies

To find relevant literature for this thesis, I leveraged the Bethel CLIC Search tool. Search key words included "parental involvement in schools," "barriers to parental involvement," "current rates of parental involvement initiatives," "political factors and parental involvement," "strategies to overcome barriers to parental involvement," "ethnicity factors on parental involvement," "socio-economic status related to parental involvement" and "family structure impact on parental involvement." The literature selected for this thesis was limited to peer-reviewed sources and those available online. An exception of this included an unpublished doctoral dissertation on middle school principals' attitudes on parental involvement (Lacey,

1999). Literature collected came from the following databases: Lirias, Sage Premier 2017, EBSCOhost Academic Search Premier, Pro Quest: Ebook Central, Elsevier ScienceDirect Journals, SpringerLink Journals Complete, Taylor & Francis Journals Complete, and the ProQuest Psychology Database.

Benefits of Parental Involvement

Parents and schools have worked together ever since schools became a formal institution. How parents and schools have worked together has evolved over the years (Eccles & Harold, 1996) with researchers defining different modes of parental involvement (as described earlier in this literature review). Therefore, it is important to consider how the evolution of this relationship between parents and schools has benefited the essential educational stakeholders.

Benefits for the Student

Useem (1992) interviewed a random sample of 86 mothers in two suburban communities to explore the link between parental involvement and their child's placement in the mathematics tracking system. Useem (1992) chose to include mothers because prior research indicated they are more directly and consistently involved in their child's education that are fathers (Epstein, 1986). The results of this study showed that there was a high correlation between a parents' educational level and the students' placement in mathematics ability groups. The higher their education, the more likely it was their students were placed into an accelerated math class. Conversely, the lower their education status, the more likely their student was placed in a remedial math class. Mothers with a higher education were more likely to be aware that their student was tracked in math. Further, mothers who were more aware of their students' math

tracking were also more integrated into a web of school activities or informal information networks or parents or both. Additionally, better-educated mothers were also more likely than other parents to intervene in direct ways to improve their children's experiences in school. Finally, when the education level of the mother was moderated by an overall Index of Parental Involvement, the children's placement in mathematics courses dropped from a correlation of .63 to .41 ($p < .001$) (p. 275). Useem (1992) concluded that parents' involvement in their child's education partially mediated their placement in higher-level mathematics courses (academic success).

Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, and Fendrich (1999) explored how parental involvement can affect their student's engagement at school. One thousand twenty five elementary students made up the sample. A three-year longitudinal study was conducted to explore the relationship between parental involvement and engagement. Engagement indicators included acting-out behaviors, quality of work habits, task orientation and ability to cope with failure. Results demonstrated that overall parental involvement had a positive correlation with school engagement. However, communication (subset of the parental involvement metrics considered) between parent and teachers negatively predicted engagement. Izzo, et al (1999) theorized that the communication was largely centered around behavior problems, where those students are more likely to be disengaged.

Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, and Darling (1992) found similar results to Useem's finding on academic achievement and Izzo et al. (1999) research on engagement. Steinberg et al. (1992) conducted a two-year longitudinal study from 1987 to 1988 sampling 6,357 students.

They administered a questionnaire to gather data on parental involvement in their education, parental encouragement, as well as a battery of academic outcomes.

Steinberg et al. (1992) found that parental involvement activities like helping with homework, attending school programs and keeping track of progress, showed that students were more likely to have higher grade point averages and were more engaged in school. While findings were similar to other research done on this issue (Izzo et al., 1999; Useem, 1992), the authors noted that their research was to the best of their knowledge the first time these findings were replicated longitudinally. The authors concluded that "*how* parents express their involvement and encouragement may be as important as whether and to what extent they do" (p. 1279).

Marchant, Paulson, and Rothlisberg (2001) researched 230 fifth and sixth grade students, exploring the impact of parental involvement on school achievement. Marchant et al. (2001) also considered the students' motivation and self-competence as a possible mediating factor with their academic achievement. Results showed that parental involvement significantly predicted student achievement (as reported by grades earned on five core courses). When students perceived that their parents valued effort to drive academic success, students were more likely to be motivated and have a higher degree of self-competence. These two variables were shown to play a mediating effect on the impact of parental involvement. The authors suggested that the findings on students' motivation and self-competency, and the factors that increase them, "is seemingly more important to actual achievement (p. 515)".

Benefits for the Parents

It is human nature to engage in activities that are more likely to result in a positive outcome rather than negative. Therefore, parents need to experience positive outcomes when engaging in parental involvement activities if they are to persist. Furthermore, parents need help to understand what role they can play to help their child succeed academically (Henderson & Berla, 1994).

Mapp (2013) conducted a study to identify factors that lead to successful partnerships between school staff and families (parental involvement). Mapp (2013) implemented a case-study design to explore in-depth and in an intimate fashion, why and how parents engage in their child's education. The author selected a school that reported 40 to 50 percent of families being involved in some aspect of parental involvement. To collect data, one-on-one in-depth interviews were conducted. Eighteen families were selected from three different ethnic backgrounds: African American, White and Hispanic American.

Five major themes emerged with four of them related to this current literature review. Theme 1 demonstrated that parents wanted their children to do well and they desired to help their child succeed. Theme 2 showed that parents understood their involvement helped their children's educational development. Theme 3 revealed that parents were involved in their children's education both at home and at school. Theme 5 found that schools that actively engaged with families, influenced why and how parents participate in their children's education. The author summarized that schools engaging in targeted parental involvement activities enhanced the parents' desire to be involved and influenced how they participated in their children's educational development.

Benefits for the Teachers

Research demonstrates that students with high levels of hyperactivity and impulsive behaviors have lower levels of academic achievement and progress (Becker, Luebbe & Langberg, 2012). These problem behaviors in the classroom can minimize the time teachers have to instruct on learning for the entire class. Badri, Qubaisi, Rashedi, and Yang (2014) conducted research to see if parental involvement might lower the rate of problem behaviors. The researchers focused on three-types of counter-productive behaviors: external (fights with others, talks back to adults), internal (lower self-esteem, sad or depressed, shows anxiety about being with a group of children), and hyperactivity (easily distracted, interrupts conversations, acts impulsively) (p. 7). The sample for this study included 391 children and 59 teachers.

The results of this study confirmed previous research that these three types of behaviors (external, internal and hyperactivity) affect a student's adjustment to school. Further, results showed that parental involvement affected these three behavior constructs in a meaningful way. In other words, these behaviors were moderated when parents were positively involved in school. The authors argue that an awareness of teachers to these behavior constructs can assist teachers in identifying students who may be at risk. With this information, teachers could work more closely with administration and parents to implement interventions that may better support the student at school and minimize distractions on the overall learning environment.

Benefits for the Schools

Student attendance has been shown to be a predictor of overall academic success (Lamdin, 1996). Further, school attendance not only affects an individual student but can also

affect an entire learning community because school funding is often a factor in how much a student regularly attends school (Maryland State Department of Education, 1999). Therefore, it is advantageous for schools to look into areas where they can improve truancy and poor daily attendance.

Epstein and Sheldon (2002) examined the relationship between absenteeism and truancy with parental involvement. Johns Hopkins University's Network of Partnership Schools were surveyed in 1996 to understand more about their schools' goals for attendance, prior attendance rates, and practices of parental involvement. Mid-year and final surveys were sent to participants to better understand the effectiveness of activities that were implemented and changes in attendance rates. In total, 12 elementary schools and six secondary schools participated.

Epstein and Sheldon (2002) found that, on average, attendance rates increased each year, more so during the years when schools focused on improving school attendance. In addition to daily attendance rates, chronic absences were also down. School efforts to increase school attendance included activities such as rewarding students for improved attendance, making home visits to chronically absent students, establishing a contact person at school for parents to work directly with, and to call home when students were absent (p. 313). The authors concluded that "schools interested in improving or maintaining good attendance will benefit from taking a comprehensive approach that involves students, educators, parents and community partners" (p. 315).

Parental Involvement: Findings vs. Reality

Despite the wealth of research demonstrating the positive effects of parental involvement, current studies suggest a decline in voluntary parental involvement participation for both parents and teachers (Egbert & Salsbury, 2009). In other words, there is an inherent gap between the rhetoric on the benefits of parental involvement and desired state of parental involvement found in schools (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

The Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher (1987) considered this topic by focusing research on teacher and student opinions on actual vs. desired level of parental involvement in education. Teachers and students, from grades 7 – 12, participated in this study. 1,306 students completed surveys and 1,035 teachers completed phone interviews. Results from students showed that most students reported that their parents are at least somewhat involved in their education. 14% of students would like their parents to be more involved while 68% would like their parent involvement to remain the same. The authors stated that these statistics taken alone do not lend support to the idea that parental involvement is too low. However when looking at grade-based demographics, students getting below a C are less likely to say their parents are involved in their education. Those getting grades below a C are also less likely than C or better students to want more involvement from their parents. Those same students, who are struggling academically, are also less likely to report feelings that their parents are interested in their education aspirations. Metropolitan Life suggested that it seems as though the students who would benefit the most from parental involvement initiatives, are those that experience and desire it less.

Further results showed that 83% of teachers would like to see the level of parental involvement in their schools increase. This was even more pronounced for inner city teachers

where 95% of teachers desired a greater level of parental involvement. Additionally, 54% of teachers thought that either 'most or many' parents take too little interest in their children's education and 50% thought parents failed to motivate their child to learn.

With the rate of parental involvement being lower than desired, as reported by teachers and parents (Metropolitan Life, 1987), it is important to consider how teacher training may affect the job readiness to implement parental involvement initiatives. Chavkin and Williams (1988) conducted a six-year Parent Involvement Education Research Project that partially focused on teacher training and parent involvement in education. Over 4,000 educators (teachers, teacher educators and principals) responded to this survey. Five hundred seventy-five teacher educators were sampled to see the degree to which parental involvement was taught in teacher preparation courses. Responses showed that only 4% of teacher educators taught a complete course on parental involvement. Just 15% reported that some of their class was devoted to parental involvement and 37% reported having just one class period on the topic. When teachers were asked if they needed training on parental involvement, 86% agreed that it was necessary and 92% of principals did. The authors concluded that the rate in which parental involvement courses were offered was far lower than what was desired and that "each university will need to do its own needs assessment to determine which kind of course would best suit its undergraduates in elementary education" (p. 87).

Barriers to Parental Involvement

With research demonstrating the benefits of parental involvement but implementation rates of parental involvement initiatives low, it is important to consider why this phenomenon is occurring. Why are parental involvement activities not more prevalent? What are the barriers

that limit the rollout or effectiveness of parental involvement initiatives? The next section of this literature review looks at barriers that have emerged in the research.

Culture

Schools are becoming more and more diverse. In 2000, approximately 28% of the United States overall population was considered a minority. Only 10 years later, that statistic jumped to 36% (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014, para. 1). Given this shift in the overall population of the United States, it is clear that our public schools are becoming more diverse as well. Another consideration affecting diversity in our public schools is that teachers are predominantly white and the demographic statistics have not changed in line with the population (Nieto, 2002). The mismatch is not necessarily directly related to lower rates of parental involvement. It is the cultural differences between a diverse population and public school teachers that has the potential to play a significant role in the effective implementation of parental involvement.

Highlighting diversity challenges to parental involvement can be found in the language that is spoken at home. The National Center for Education Statistics is a federal entity that collects, analyzes and report's findings on the condition of the education system within the United States. The overall goal is to address high priority education needs; provide consistent, reliable, complete, and accurate indicators of education status and trends in a timely, useful and meaningful way to the U.S. Department of Education, and Congress, the states, policy makers and the general public. Llaga and Snyder (2003) were part of these efforts. They considered the data set and looked at educational trends of Hispanic students. They found that the Hispanic population is the largest growing minority group in the U.S. Further, just 57% of kindergarten through 12th grade Hispanic students spoke mostly English at home. What they found was that

rates of parental involvement were significantly lower for Hispanic families than for "white, non-Hispanic" families. It was concluded that parents not being able to speak the same language as educators, lowered the comfort level of parents to participate in school events, attend conferences or act as a volunteer.

Calzada, Huang, Hernandez, Soriano, Acra, Dawson-McClure, Kamboukos, and Brotman, (2015) conducted a study to identify predictors of parental involvement among Latino and Afro-Caribbean immigrant students attending public schools in low-income areas. The goal of this research was to identify possible sub-groups of immigrant parents that may be at a high risk of low parental involvement. The study participants included 293 Afro-Caribbean and 343 Latino immigrants. Parents from these groups completed a 15-item survey asking about their perceived connections to the school. Teachers also completed a survey; 18-item survey designed to measure home and school based parental involvement. Independent variables considered included socio-economic status, cultural characteristics and teacher characteristics. Results confirmed previous research in the area of socio-economic status; families with lower income overall, reported lower parental involvement engagement. Further confirmed by teacher ratings, education level, single parent status and poverty, predicted levels of parental involvement. Additional results showed that among the Latino population, parental involvement was higher when the teacher was also Latino, which highlights a possible barrier of culture. A limitation of this study was ratings were across home and school initiatives and did not include ratings on parents own home-based involvement initiatives that were independent of school initiatives. The underlying strength of this article is it further demonstrates that outreach programs for parental involvement need to be well thought out and structured. The authors concluded that these reach out efforts need to take a different shape depending on the family. Parental involvement is not a

one size fits all application. Cultural factors play a central role in how parental involvement initiatives are designed and ultimately, how effective they are.

Income Status

Socio-economic status has been shown to perpetuate social-inequalities from one generation to the next (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) which has an impact on parental involvement. Hemmerrechts, Agirdag and Kavadias (2017) researched this link between parental involvement and socio-economic status. They used survey data from the 2006 Progress International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). Later versions of PIRLS did not include parental involvement metrics so they focused on the 2006 data in their study. The participants of this survey were from 40 countries and 5 Canadian provinces. The data included information on reading skills, demographic information and parental involvement activities at home. The researchers chose to use the data-set from Western European countries who had a reasonable high response rate of 80% or higher. Much of their research focused on reading literacy, so they further paired down the data set to include those respondents who had students in the fourth year of formal schooling. These students were expected to be "at the transition from learning to read to reading to learn" and therefore had a similar age (average age of 10.3 years). After removing cases that did not include questionnaire information on parental involvement at home, 43,870 cases remained in their sample. The study focused on 4 variables: early parental literacy involvement, late parental literacy involvement, reading literacy test (low burden test administered to students) and attitudes of students toward reading. Linear regression models were used to report on the research findings.

The results of this study revealed that students whose families have a low socio-economic experienced a low early parental literacy involvement while later experienced a higher late

parental literacy involvement than students with high socio-economic status did. The findings also showed that positive attitudes of students towards reading are more likely for children in higher socio-economic status families who experience a high level of early parental literacy involvement. Further, students who experience more late parental literacy involvement than early parental literacy involvement also have lower reading literacy scores. Overall, these findings revealed that early parental literacy involvement has a positive relationship with reading literacy and those families with a high socio-economic status were more likely to participate in early parental literacy involvement. Those families with low socio-economic status began participating in parental literacy involvement initiatives almost too late, which negatively affected their reading literacy scores. The authors summarized that families with low socio-economic status tend to have an enduring influence on parental involvement.

Parent Perceptions

The capability of a teacher to establish and maintain parental involvement has been shown time and again to be a predictor for educational success. But even well thought out and implemented parental involvement initiatives on behalf of a teacher runs the risk of being meaningless if the perceptions of parents are overlooked in the design. The following portion of this literature review explores factors related to the parent perceptions, beliefs about parental involvement, invitations to participate in parental involvement and current life context.

Parental perception on parental involvement initiatives has the capacity to play a large role in implementation effectiveness. Rodriguez, Blatz and Elbaum (2014) studied 96 parents of children with disabilities across 18 different schools. The population consisted of 55% White, 24% Latino, 17% Black and 3% multiracial. A total of 17 focus groups and one individual

interview session with each parent was conducted. In each focus group, the participants were first debriefed on the School Efforts to Partner with Parents Scale. This scale consisted of 25 items designed to measure parental involvement and overall program (disability initiatives) effectiveness.

Results revealed a number of things. Among them was parents had a positive perception of parental involvement when school staff, including teachers, were perceived to be accessible. Unfavorable perceptions on parental involvement collaboration were more apparent in situations where schools were more rigid and inaccessible in providing services. Additional results revealed that parents identified three primary characteristics of positive communication: occurred regularly, were about child's progress and were delivered using a variety of methods. Further results showed that parents' perceptions of individual teachers mattered greatly in their willingness to engage in parental involvement. The authors argued that their research demonstrated an effective minimum baseline of parental involvement effort by a teacher. A teacher may not have to devote as much time and resources to parental involvement if they can keep parents informed of progress. The authors further suggested that providing this feedback on an individual level is an ambitious goal for teachers that may have well over 100 students. This study was limited as it did not fully explore the different online tools/systems that could be deployed to promote efficiencies in delivering individualized feedback.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) conducted a literature review study to explore parental perceptions and its influence on parental involvement. In their research, they considered peer-reviewed articles related to psychological theory and research that focused on why some parents become involved in their child's education and others do not. A major construct they

developed from this research that affects a parent's decision to become involved in their child's learning, is "Parents' Sense of Efficacy for Helping Children Succeed in School." Do parents' believe that their involvement will have a meaningful difference in their school-age child's success? The Self-Efficacy part of it suggests that parents' will think through possible actions in advance of their behavior. They will consider possible and likely outcomes resulting from these actions. If a parent has a low level of belief that they can influence their child's outcomes, they are more likely to avoid parental involvement initiatives because they do not feel it will bring about positive. The lack of confidence on the part of the parent can originate from the belief they will not be able to communicate effectively with the teacher, they've had previous negative experiences, they feel they do not possess the academic means necessary or from behavioral difficulties in their own schooling. The authors concluded that these parental perceptions can clearly act as a barrier to parental involvement.

The Parents' current life context can also play a large role in whether or not they become involved in their child's education. Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, and Sandler (2007) sampled 853 parents of first through sixth grade children, enrolled in a socioeconomically and ethnically diverse metropolitan school system. Part of their study explored parental involvement and the influence of specific invitations from the teacher and their child. A survey was administered on this construct looking at three areas; 6-items measured parent's perceptions that the school staff/environment welcomed them as a participant ("general invitation"); 5-items measured reported direct requests from teachers on involvement at home or in school; and 5-items measured perceptions on the child requesting parental help or engagement. Of these three measures of invitation (general, teacher-specific, child-specific), teacher and child invitations were shown to be significant predictors of parental involvement. General invitations for

involvement from the school were not a significant predictor. Their findings suggest that if a teacher does not directly invite parents and/or create a structure where by the student is inviting their parent to be involved, then they are missing an opportunity that has shown to be effective in encouraging parental involvement.

Ethnicity

There is a large body of emerging research focused on the increasing gaps in academic achievement between ethnic minorities and white youth (Mandara, Varner, Greene & Richman, 2009). As discussed, parental involvement positively affects overall student academic achievement, it is important for researchers to look at ethnicity's influence on parental involvement. Hong and Ho (2005) conducted a study that explored the link between parental involvement and ethnicity and the affect on student's academic achievement. In this study, the National Education Longitudinal Survey was used. The National Education Longitudinal Survey was collected in 1988 and included 24,599 eighth graders from 1,052 schools. This database included a variety of demographics, academic, social, psychological, and familial variables (including parental involvement). The variables used for this study and relevant to this literature review included items on parental involvement, ethnicity and student achievement. Parental involvement consisted of four dimensions: communication, parent educational aspiration (for the child), participation, and supervision. The measures used for student achievement measures were test scores estimated from item response theory. As this was a longitudinal study, parental involvement and student achievement was measured from eighth grade through twelfth. As with most longitudinal studies, participants are not always available through the duration of the study. To minimize nonrandom attrition (missing data may be found more commonly for specific groups), the study employed full-information maximum-likelihood estimation.

The results of this study showed that ethnic differences had a direct effect on the dimensions of parental involvement and academic achievement. For the White sample, communication and parental aspiration were most effective in having both immediate and lasting effects on student achievement. For the Asian American sample, the most effective parental involvement factor was parental participation. Parental aspiration was found to be a moderating factor in only short-term achievement and not long-term. Conversely, parental communication did not have a short-term affect on achievement but did have a long-term impact. For the African-American sample, parental aspiration was important for immediate effects on student achievement only. Whereas parental supervision was found to effect student achievement long-term but not short-term. For the Hispanic sample, only parent communication was found to effect academic achievement and only had a short-term effect and was not long-lasting across the four year study. The authors argue that the importance of identifying parental involvement factors that directly influence student achievement and how they can be moderated by ethnic considerations. Hong and Ho (2005) suggest that teachers who are aware of these potential differences based on ethnicity can tailor their parental involvement initiatives accordingly to maximize those efforts and their impact on student achievement.

Child Factors

Within secondary students, parental involvement has been shown to increase academic achievement (Deslandes & Royer, 1997). However, adolescents are beginning to distance themselves from their parents and increasing their self-reliance (Deslandes, 2000). Deslandes and Cloutier (2002) conducted a study with a primary focus on parental involvement practices that adolescents view as supportive to their schooling. Understanding what parental involvement

activities adolescents feel is important can help schools and teachers design strategies for parental involvement programs.

In their study, 872 students (468 girls & 404 boys) were included. Gender, student's autonomy/work-orientation/perseverance and student views of parental involvement in schooling activities were among the metrics relevant to this literature review. The metric on student views was collected using a survey instrument asking them how likely they are to involve their parents. Questions included items such as: 'Would it be OK if a teacher asked you to do these things?'; Ask your parent to listen to something you wrote'; 'Bring home notes, notices, or a newsletter from school'; 'Invite your parent to attend activities that you are in at school'; and 'Discuss with your parent about next year's courses' (p. 224). Respondents indicated a 1 as the value for yes and 0 the value for no.

The results indicated that all but two parental involvement activities were supported by adolescents. The exceptions were parents visiting their classroom or going on a class trip. The authors suggest that adolescents view parental involvement in school as a private matter and should not be mixed with peers or teachers. The top four parental involvement activities supported by adolescents include (in order from greatest support to least) 'Show your parent something you learned or did well', 'Ask your parent to give you some ideas for a story or project', ' Bring home notes, notices, or a newsletter from school', and 'Have your parent tell you about when he/she was a teenager' (p. 226). Additional analysis revealed that gender differences existed with female support being higher than male for parental involvement initiatives on 10 of the 14 measures. The four showing no differences included themes around support to improve or keep grades up or parental visits (in the classroom or on a field trip). The

authors articulate a plausible explanation that parental involvement is more beneficial for girls than boys because of their greater susceptibility to parental influence.

Additionally, the authors considered the student's autonomy/self-esteem, work-orientation and perseverance. They found a broad willingness for students to support parental involvement activities but this varied by the student's autonomy/self-esteem. Students found to be more perseverant were proud of their work and more likely to support parental involvement activities. Similarly, students with a higher rate of autonomy and self-esteem were also more likely to support parental involvement activities. The researchers concluded that based on these findings, it is important to pay particular attention to adolescents views and maturity levels when designing parental involvement programs. If not appropriately considered, programs may favor those students already predisposed to promote parent involvement.

Administration Attitudes

As discussed above, parental involvement is shown to occur more frequently during early childhood education, but the benefits have "strong positive effects for involving parents continuously through high school" (Flaxman & Inger, 1991, p. 6). Wheeler (1992) stated, "Parent involvement at the middle and secondary school levels is vital if teenagers are to become stable and productive adults" (p. 28). Therefore, the need for parental involvement extends beyond the elementary years. Implementing school-based parental involvement programs includes buy-in from administrators. This section of the literature review will focus on administration attitudes towards parental involvement between elementary and secondary levels.

Elementary Administrator Attitudes

Brittle (1994) examined the attitudes of elementary principals in Virginia towards parental involvement. The Parent Involvement Inventory was used in part to collect data on principal's attitudes. The final instrument consisted of 50 statements related to parent involvement in schools. All elementary schools in Virginia were invited to participate. Three hundred seventy one of seven hundred principals returned their survey (53% response rate).

Relative to this literature review, there was strong support from principals on the topic of parental involvement. Results showed that principals felt parental involvement was important (78% agreement). Principals also felt that the administration was partly responsible for parental involvement implementation (90% agreement) and overcoming barriers (95% agreement). Finally, 72% felt it was easy to involve middle to upper class parents in school activities. In summary, Brittle's findings suggest that elementary school principals believe in parental involvement in schools and that part of their role is initiating and supporting school-based parental involvement programs.

Secondary Administrator Attitudes

Lloyd-Smith and Baron (2010) focused their research on high-school (secondary) attitudes of parental involvement. Brittle's (1994) survey (used for elementary administration data collection) was modified slightly so the language was more appropriate for secondary audiences. Lloyd-Smith and Baron (2010) centered their research questions on principal's beliefs about the concept of parental involvement and how they felt about communication (between schools and parents) and collaboration.

Results showed that administrators in South Dakota's high schools do not display strong tendencies for or against parental involvement. Only 6 of the 32 questions used to measure these tendencies indicated agreement or strong agreement. Lloyd-Smith and Baron (2010) suggested these results showed that South Dakota secondary principals do not overwhelmingly support or reject the concept of parental involvement. Administrators also reported that fear of failure by the parents and fear of criticism on the part of the teacher played a role in limiting communication. Further, principals found there to be collaboration issues with parents. They indicated a lack of collaboration due to external factors such as those beyond the control of the administrator, such as lack of time to volunteer.

In summary, the results confirmed that individual administrator's attitudes differ regarding the parental involvement at the secondary level. Lloyd-Smith and Baron (2010) argue that this belief is based on an assumption that high school parents no longer wish to be active in parental involvement activities. The authors go on to argue that much of the responsibility of involvement and partnership lied with building principals who have a responsibility to lead their staff and teachers in developing programs designed to increase parental involvement. While building administrators agreed on the benefits of parental involvement, their attitudes and actions did not align with parental involvement initiatives being implemented effectively.

Related to administrator attitudes, the conclusions arrived at in this literature review is that administrator attitudes towards parental involvement change from elementary through secondary levels. Elementary principals are more likely to believe in parental involvement initiatives and feel like they are responsible for initiating, promoting and supporting such efforts. Limitations to this summary include different survey instrument used and potentially state demographics (can these findings be replicated across states). Further, the author of this

literature review could not locate an original source on middle school administrator perceptions. Although a reference was made by Lloyd-Smith and Baron (2010) to a study done by Lacey (1999) which concluded that middle school principals are less likely to be strong advocates of parental involvement.

Changing Family Structures

The family structures across the United States and Europe are changing. These changes include an increase in parental working hours, longer commute times, greater number of families with both parents working, increases in divorce and separation, resulting in sole parenting and re-partnering. In addition, there are fewer extended families, a decrease in religious practices, and increased community fragmentation (David, Edwards, Hughes & Ribbens, 1993). The result of these shifts is that parents have higher stress, less money and less time. These are all in opposition to maximizing parental involvement (OECD, 1997).

Myers and Myers (2015) looked at 10 different family structures and explored the relationship with parental involvement. These 10 family structures were as follows: TWO PARENTS - biological married, biological cohabiting, stepfather (biological mother), stepmother (biological father), biological mother cohabitating, biological father cohabitating, non-biological parents; ONE PARENT - biological mother, biological father and non-biological. Data used in this study was from the 2007 Parent and Family Involvement in Education surveys. 10,681 parent or parent guardians were included. Homeschooled students, kindergarten students and students missing dependent variable data were omitted, resulting in a final sample 9,504 parents. All 50 states and the District of Columbia were included in this sample. A regression analysis was performed to study the link between family structure and parental involvement. Other factors were considered as well but were unrelated to this section of the literature review.

Results showed a strong support for biologically married families and increased parental involvement over all the other nine family structures. Biologically married families the highest level of parental involvement. All other family structures reports a statistically significantly decrease in parental involvement efforts. The next family structure with a higher parental involvement indices was biological cohabitating. The data suggests that there are relative disadvantages of living in a single parent household compared to biologically married parents when considering parental involvement. The authors argued that these results shows a need for enhanced focus on ways to increase parental involvement among those family structures who traditionally have low rates of participation.

Political Factors

There is no research demonstrating a link between government instituted parental involvement initiatives and the impact on actualized parental involvement initiatives. However, emerging research has looked at this context more locally with a focus on school-based initiatives designed to promote parental involvement.

Cooper (2010) conducted a study examining the impact of school-based parental involvement initiatives and the affect on parental involvement activities taking place. The data came out of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Cohort created by the National Center for Education Statistics. One thousand two hundred and eighty schools were selected for participation. In the fall 1998, data was collected from children enrolled in part or full-day kindergarten programs in both private and public schools. Spring data was also collected. During both data collection cycles, parents were interviewed about their child, home environment, parenting behavior, and family characteristics either over the phone or at home. Teachers completed assessments of these students as well as surveys about their own

background, experience, teaching style, and classroom learning environment. School administrators completed surveys on the physical, organization, and fiscal characteristics of their schools, as well as the school's learning environment and programs. Finally, students' measurements on cognitive and content knowledge was collected. The final sample consisted of 19,375 students and parents. Among the measures considered, the ones relevant to this literature review included school-based parental involvement, socio-economic status and school mandated programs. A multi-model regression analysis was conducted on these measures and results were reported.

The results of this research showed findings consistent with other research, whereby families of low socio-economic status had lower levels of school-based parental involvement. However, when schools participated in outreach programs, this moderated the negative effect of families of low socio-economic status. In other words, when schools were more involved in reaching out to families, there was a significant and positive relationship that promoted school-based parental involvement and lowered the effect that a family's low socio-economic status had on school-based parental involvement. However, school outreach programs also raised the level of school-based parental involvement for families of high socio-economic status. This actually increased the gap of school-based parental involvement between low and high socio-economic status. The authors concluded that school outreach programs raised the level of school-based parental involvement, but more so for families that were already higher (higher socio-economic status). The author suggests that such outreach programs may unintentionally target middle and upper class parents. It was further argued that may need to do more to help cover expenses for low socio-economic families for activities related to parental involvement (transportation and childcare were suggested).

Strategies to Overcome Parental Involvement Barriers

Given the overwhelming research on the positive relationship between parental involvement and student academic achievement, it is important for teachers and parents to work together to overcome potential barriers within the implementation of parental involvement initiatives. This section reviews research-based conclusions where these barriers can possibly be minimized.

Communication

A mounting body of evidence suggests that children's academic success may be predicted by quality communication between educators and parents (Jeynes, 2008). Durand (2011) conducted a research study focusing on the relationship between Latino families, parental involvement (at home and in schools) and academic achievement (specifically, literacy). The data for this study was taken from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Class of 1998-1999 (children who began kindergarten during the fall of 1998). The data focused on documenting children's growth in cognitive, social and health-related domains. Additional data collected was on families, schools and classrooms. Data was collected fall and spring of kindergarten and 1st grade, and in the spring of third, fifth and eighth grades. Durand's study focused only on the data collected during the kindergarten year (fall and spring) and Latino students. The final sample consisted of 2,051 Latino students. Metrics analyzed included student literacy skills, parental involvement at home and in school, sources of variability in parent involvement (socio-economic status, social capital, teacher outreach perceptions and English proficiency) and demographics (students' sex, age (in months), marital status and home language). A regression analysis was performed to explore relationships between these metrics.

Findings relative to the overcoming of parental involvement barriers revealed that increased contact and communication between Latino parents and schools/teachers increases the parents' knowledge and understanding of the content and expectations of the school curriculum. The parent is better position to support their child's learning at home (parental involvement).

The strongest factor predicting parental involvement *in school* from this study was a parent's social capital. This was defined as "the number of parents from their child's classroom that they spoke regularly with, and knew well enough to talk to" (p. 483). Social capital was also a strong predictor for parental involvement *at home*. The researcher linked these findings with Bourdieu's (1977) article on teachers/schools helping parents build social capital by facilitating the forming social networks. The authors suggested that the building of these social networks can help parents navigate the school environment, which may be unfamiliar to them from their own experiences.

Meeting Time

Families of low socio-economic status are more likely to have jobs in the service sector that afford little flexibility in their availability (Sheldon, 2002) to meet with teachers (parental involvement at school). McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, and Sekino (2004) conducted a study to obtain a multi-dimensional picture of parental involvement in kindergarten. They sampled 307 ethnic minority kindergarten students from a large urban school district. Children ranged from 5-7 years old. Ninety-five percent were African American, 4% were Asian American, and 1% was Latino or "Other." Included in the study were participants seven public elementary schools. Within these schools, the percentage from low-income families (families receiving Aid for Dependent Children or food stamp services) ranged from 90% - 98.5%. Among the metrics reviewed, those metrics relevant to parental involvement at school included

parental involvement (40-item self-report survey) and academic competence (5-point Likert-type scale where teachers reported on achievement of students in areas of reading, math, motivation and classroom behavior). Construct validation analysis was used to report on research findings.

The results of this study showed that parents reported barriers to parental involvement at school due to their increased financial stress (low-income families) and work responsibilities (service-sector jobs limiting their flexibility/availability). This research was limited in that it did not focus on school environment factors that affect family outreach. In other words, what can schools/teacher do to better accommodate families that have limitations in availability? Future research should explore initiatives schools/teachers make to accommodate family availability to promote an increase in parental involvement at school. Anecdotally, the authors suggested that it appears that the more flexible schools/teachers are in their availability to meet with parents, it would likely increase the opportunity for parental involvement at school.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy, in the context of parental involvement, refers to the level at which parents believe their actions will have a positive impact on the education of their child (Reininger & Lopez, 2017). If a parent has low self-efficacy, they are less likely to engage in parental involvement activities. Reininger and Lopez (2017) sought to examine parents' self-efficacy and their level of parental involvement. For their study, cross-sectional data was collected from parents of children in the first and fourth grades. The schools considered in this study belonged to the Pronino-Consejo de Defensa del Nino (a Chilean non-profit program designed to eradicate child-labor through direct intervention programs in schools within Chile). Data was collected via anonymous surveys given at parent-teacher conferences or sent home. 650 surveys were sent out, 519 were returned. Three surveys were eliminated based on missing over 90% of the data

resulting in a final sample of 516. Among the metrics, those related to this literature review included Parental Sense of Efficacy scale (5-point Likert scale) and Parent Choice of Involvement scales (home and school based involvement). Hierarchical regression analysis was performed to understand the variance between these factors.

The study's results showed parental at-home involvement and parental sense of self-efficacy were significantly and positively related. In contrast, this study showed that parental at-school involvement and the parent's sense of self-efficacy had a significant negative relationship. The authors argued that this suggests that parents who feel they are less likely to be able to impact their child's education in a positive manner may rely more heavily on guidance and support from the school in order to compensate for their lack of sense of efficacy. Related to this finding, further results revealed that student invitations directly to parents increased at school parental involvement (and at home as well). In other words, incorporating student invitations promoting at school parental involvement is more likely to minimize a parent's low sense of self-efficacy having an impact on their likelihood to engage in at school parental involvement activities.

Chapter III: Discussion and Conclusion

Summary of Literature

This literature review was designed to understand the benefits of parental involvement, compare the current implementation rates, consider the barriers for implementation and address research based strategies for overcoming these barriers. Considering the affect that parental involvement has on student's success, it is important to understand how these issues interconnect.

Academic achievement is perhaps the most considered benefit of parental involvement in the research. Useem (1992) concluded that parental involvement interventions predicted higher achievement in the field of mathematics. Steinberg et al. (1992) demonstrated further the impact of parental involvement on academic achievement; finding a meaningful relationship with that of overall grade point average. Marchant et al. (2001) also found significant results on academic achievement when parents were involved in helping their child become more motivated to achieve.

Student engagement in school is an important driver of academic success. Parental involvement has been shown to significantly increase a students' engagement in school (Izzo et al., 1999; Marchant et al., 2001; Steinberg et al., 1992). Factors that drive a students' engagement to achieve may be more important to consider in research than actual achievement (Marchant et al., 2001). Parental involvement is one such driver of student engagement that has emerged in the research.

Within the research, and subsequently the application of parental involvement, considers the parent side of parental involvement. If a parent understands how they can help their child succeed, they are more likely to engage in those behaviors (Henderson & Berla, 1994). Mapp

(2003) showed that parents want their children to do well in school, understood they can help their child succeed, were involved at home and in school, and that schools actively involved in promoting parental involvement led to higher rates of involvement. Mapp (2013) summarized that schools with specific outreach strategies helped to inform parents on what they could do to help their child succeed, leading to higher rates of parental involvement.

Teachers benefit from parental involvement efforts in unique ways. Counterproductive behaviors in class can lead to lower academic achievement and progress across all students (Becker et al., 2012). Badri et al. (2014) found that parental involvement can help teachers manage the classroom by lessening the rate of problem behaviors in the classroom. When teachers and parents work together to address classroom issues, there are positive effects on the overall learning.

The educational institution (schools) also benefit from parental involvement being a part of their culture. Student attendance at school has been shown to be a factor in academic success (Lamdin, 1996) and overall attendance can also factor in to how much funding a school receives (Maryland State Department of Education, 1999). Epstein and Sheldon (2002) found that parental involvement does have a positive effect on lowering truancy and daily absenteeism.

Despite the research showing the benefits of parental involvement, the rate of implementation is lower than expected. In fact, parental involvement participation is trending downwards (Egbert & Salsbury, 2009) creating a gap between desired and actual rate of parental involvement (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). The Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher (1987) further explored this trend and found that parents and teachers did not feel that parental involvement efforts were adequate. Further, the rate of parental involvement implementation was even lower for struggling students (C or below), those students that might benefit most from

such efforts. Chavkin and Williams (1988) considered teacher training impact on parental involvement actualization and found that teacher-training programs lacked suitable preparation programs for aspiring teachers to develop their awareness and skills to implement parental involvement initiatives.

With the rate of parental involvement being lower than desired, researchers have also explored barriers to implementation. A large barrier to implementation is based on the differing cultures of the school when compared to home (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014; Nieto, 2002). The differences in culture often plays out in the language spoken at home differing from the language spoken within the schools. Llaga and Snyder (2003) found that Hispanic parents speaking Spanish at home were less likely to communicate with schools that spoke English. Further, they had a lower comfort level to participate in school events, attend conferences or act as a volunteer. Calzada et al. (2015) found similar results when they determined that Latino parents were more likely to engage in parental involvement activities when the teacher was also Latino.

Socio-economic status was also shown to be a possible barrier to parental involvement. Research shows that socio-economic status can perpetuate from one generation to the next (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) so it is important to understand how this may be a barrier in parental involvement in order to limit its affects. Hemmerrechts et al. (2017) showed that low socio-economic status played a role in the academic success of the child. It was concluded that these parents become involved in their child's education too late, beyond the time when reading literacy is more likely to take hold within a child. The researchers did find that early parental involvement initiatives minimized the effect of low socio-economic status on achievement.

Parent perceptions on parental involvement are an important indicator as to whether or not they will participate in those efforts. Rodriguez et al. (2014) demonstrated that parents who perceive education staff as being accessible are more likely to participate in parental involvement. Further, when teacher communications remained positive and parents viewed those teacher positively, they were more likely to engage in parental involvement. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) also concluded that parent perceptions acted as a barrier to parental involvement.

Ethnicity of the student has shown to be moderating affect on academic achievement (Mandara et al., 2009). Hong and Ho (2005) demonstrated that these ethnic differences played a role in the rate of academic achievement. The preference for different types of parental involvement efforts (communication, parent aspiration and parent participation) varied based on ethnicity. Not all parental involvement activities were valued the same across groups. If a teacher does not consider how the types of parental involvement activities are impacted by ethnicity, this lack of understanding may act as a barrier to parental involvement.

Administrator attitudes were also shown to act as a possible barrier to effective parental involvement. Brittle (1994) showed that elementary administrators attitudes on parental involvement were favorable. They felt parental involvement was important, thought they had a responsibility to promote these efforts, and felt the implementation of parental involvement was good. Lloyd-Smith and Baron (2010) findings on secondary administrator's perceptions contrasted Brittle's findings. At the secondary level, administrators showed lower level agreement in how they valued parental involvement. They also were less likely to feel responsible to implement parental involvement efforts. How administrator attitudes change from kindergarten through twelfth grade can serve as a barrier to parental involvement.

The structure of families is changing (David et al., 1993) resulting in outcomes that are in opposition to successful parental involvement initiatives (OECD, 1997). Myers and Myers (2015) considered the parent relationship and found that biologically married parents were more likely to engage in parental involvement than were all other nine types of parental structures considered. The findings reveal a barrier to parental involvement for children living in families that do not have married biological parents and the number of those children living in this context continues to increase.

Overcoming these barriers is an important area for researchers to look into. Quality communication between educators and parents is emerging as a driving factor on academic success (Jeynes, 2008). Durand (2011) demonstrated that increased contact and communication increased Latino parents knowledge and understanding of how they could support parental involvement initiatives. This helped to lessen the impact that language and ethnicity had as a barrier to parental involvement.

Minimizing the effect of low socio-economic status is also an important barrier to researchers to look at. Because low socio-economic families are more likely to work in sector-related fields, they may not be as available to participate in at-school activities (Sheldon, 2002). McWayne et al. (2004) demonstrated this barrier further by showing that families of low socio-economic status were less likely to attend school-related activities because their availability was limited. Teachers being more flexible with their availability would help minimize the effect of socio-economic status.

Helping to minimize the barrier poor parent's perceptions on parental involvement can also be found in the research. If a parent does not feel their actions will help their child succeed at school, they are less likely to engage in parental involvement activities. Reininger and Lopez

(2017) confirmed earlier research that a parent's self-efficacy played a role in parental involvement. Lower self-efficacy resulted in lower rates of parental involvement. Their research found direct student invitations for parental involvement moderated the barrier of self-efficacy.

Limitations of the Research

The research examining the role of parental involvement and the benefits offered in the educational setting is broad. In other words, there seem to be so many factors at play that research has not been able to identify a definitive model parental involvement tools that can be used across a general setting. There may be many reasons for this. One reason may be that researchers lack consistent definitions of what parental involvement is. Some research defines parental involvement as a parent's aspiration for their child's success. Other researchers view parental involvement on specific activities that parents engage in with their child (help with homework, attending parent-teacher conferences, attending school-sponsored events). This lack of consistency in defining parental involvement makes it difficult to come to broad conclusions on what will work in a general setting, limiting the ease of implementation.

Related to defining parental involvement, when gathering this data, most researchers collect non-objective data on parental involvement. Most of the research is collected via surveys. Therefore, the dataset includes information on what parents say they do. No measures are collected that demonstrate what parents actually do.

Additionally, the activities that teachers, administrators and general educators engage in to promote parental involvement are very broad and complex in the research. There are too many *things* (i.e. pro-active communication, school-based initiatives, designing school work centered around parent support, student-invitations for involvement, etc.) that can be done to

achieve parental involvement that it limits the likelihood that any one educator can possibly construct a plan that accounts for all the variance associated with promoting successful parental involvement initiatives. This author could not find a research study that compared the variance on the different types of education-based parental involvement strategies.

Another limitation in the research is that almost all of the research designs reviewed in this literature review lacked a true experimental design. Most of the research designs used correlation analysis, which reports on likelihood rather than causation. This limits the confidence and application of the findings because the research cannot definitively state that parental involvement actually *caused* the benefits reported.

Considering the body of research as a whole, there was many gaps that exist limiting the overall picture of parental involvement effectiveness from being clearer. For example, the rate of parental involvement being lower than desired (Egbert & Salsbury, 2009; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; The Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher, 1987) is important to understand more about. This author could not find definitive research on why teachers may not engage in parental involvement initiatives more than they do. Further, no studies seem to exist that highlight specific characteristics or competencies of teachers that are more likely to promote parental involvement initiatives. Is there a teacher profile that works to better promote parental involvement? Can this profile be developed to raise the levels of all teachers and their competency to implement parental involvement initiatives?

Finally, this author found a few longitudinal studies that tracked the same students while comparing the effectiveness of parental involvement. However, the largest longitudinal period of this type of study was three-years. Research considering the full spectrum of education

(kindergarten through twelfth grade – and possibly beyond) that track the same students over time, would help inform the body of research.

Implications for Future Research

One of the issues with the findings on parental involvement is that it seems like an intricate web of modes of parental involvement and student factors. It feels as though certain parental initiatives will have an effect on one family but not another, even within the same classroom. How can a teacher reasonably gain a sense of what will work best to engage individual families much less take action on that, especially with secondary teachers having over 100 students? Future research should be done to fine tune the parental involvement initiatives have the best results in repeated instances. In other words, what modes of parental involvement have the most variance in finding success within parental involvement interactions? This research should summarize findings based on school-level statistics of socio-economic status and ethnicity, which seem to have the greatest discrepancy in parental involvement effectiveness between families. Researchers should limit the number of models (i.e. demographics of schools) and tailor a parental involvement solution based on those school models for teachers and administration to consider when implementing initiatives. Teachers and administrations could then select the model that fits best for their schools and take action accordingly. This might increase the early success rate of parental involvement reach out strategies and make it more likely that a teacher and schools will sustain coordinated efforts.

Much of the research that exists on parental involvement compares data from surveys, demographics and academic achievement metrics. That is a good starting point to report on correlations and even causation to some degree. However, there is little research centered on specific case studies that highlight why certain parental involvement initiatives work over others

in various contexts. It is one thing to report that the data suggests parental involvement initiatives by the school improve parental involvement at all levels but actually increase the parental involvement gap between high and low socio-economic families (Cooper, 2010). It is another type of research altogether that can get at the *why* it might happen. Mapp (2013) implemented a case study and succeeded in offering a clearer picture on parental involvement in a specific setting, exploring more of the *why* and *how*. More case studies should be done to paint a clearer picture on why some parental involvement initiatives work in some settings and not others.

Finally, as teachers, schools and parents work together to forge positive parental involvement initiatives, research should be done on how a school can look at the demographics specific to their setting to maximize the likelihood of success. The overwhelming body of research demonstrates that parental involvement initiatives work but don't necessarily prescribe what an individual school should be doing in their community. There are too many modes of parental involvement to reasonably do all of them. In what ways can schools better understand their setting when creating school-based parental involvement initiatives? I would like to see research done that results in a prescriptive method for schools to collect, analyze and act upon data that will better inform the parental involvement initiatives that are most likely to work in their setting.

Implications for Professional Application

As I delved into the research of parental involvement, I was encouraged by the success such initiatives have on a number of factors including academic success, motivation, student engagement, teacher/student/parent morale and much more. As an educator, I strive to maximize the success of all of my students and to take action where I can. In the remainder of this

professional application section, I will focus on some things I plan to do (or continue doing) to maximize the impact parental involvement.

Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, and Fendrich (1999) research finding that communication can sometimes negatively predict a parent's willingness to engage resonated with me. The authors suggested that too often, communication only occurs when there is a behavioral issue. This may turn some parents off from communication altogether. I feel challenged as an educator to promote more positive and proactive communications to families that showcase my desire to truly help their student succeed. Then, if behavior issues arise and negatively-toned communication is required, my hope is that I have built up enough positive interactions so as not to discourage future communication.

Llaga and Snyder (2003) found that Hispanic families were less likely to communicate with schools when they did not speak the same language as the teachers. Within my communication to families, I will carefully consider the language I use so that it can be easily understood to minimize the impact of parent education and ethnicity status. Even a well articulated message may fall on deaf ears if it is written in a manner that is not easily understood.

Increasing the parent's knowledge on what is going on in the classroom is another practical application I desire to become better at. I have had instances where I have needed to reach out to a parent and inform them their student had failed a test. More than once the parent has indicated they knew nothing of the test and had they known, they would have ensured their student took the time to prepare and even help their student with the work. A practical way to do this would be to send weekly correspondences (flyer or email) to all parents, informing them of the learning targets that week and when students will have homework or tests. Setting up an online classroom could be another way to implement this idea. Although I would not want that

to be the sole way of communicated in an effort to avoid families who may not have time or access to the internet.

I argued for more research that creates a model for teachers to better understand what parental involvement initiatives are more likely to work in their setting. A practical application for this would be to ask individual families what parental involvement initiatives work best for them. This could be done through a beginning of the year survey or asking directly via email or parent-teacher conferences. I could take this one step further and ask the parent what their goals are for their student or what challenges they may have faced in the past and possibly what actions were taken that were found to be successful.

I am a math instructor and one the things I continually challenge myself with is to not simply assign a worksheet for students to practice/master a particular learning target. I enjoy creating relevant projects centered around what we learned that challenges students to think differently about the math. A way I could promote parental involvement is by creating projects that require parent/guardian support.

A key research finding was that student-invitations for parental involvement minimized a parent's low feeling of self-efficacy (Reininger & Lopez, 2017). In my experience, school activities such as math night and other programs, tend to draw families of students that are already performing well in school. Absent are the families whose child is struggling which may be related to low self-efficacy on the part of the parent. Leveraging Reininger and Lopez (2017) research, I could implement a flyer to promote family learning events at school designed as a student-invitation. The invitation could require students to get their parents signature and an indication on whether or not they plan to attend the event.

As the research shows, there are countless modes of parental involvement initiatives that can be considered. As a teacher, I know I have limited time to devote to parental involvement while considering all of the other responsibilities both in-school and at-home. I have chosen to focus on targeted proactive communications. My belief is that this will increase the number of parents that engage and open up other opportunities to continue to support families at an individual level.

Conclusion

No one can argue the research that parental involvement has a positive effect on numerous outcomes of students. The lower than expected rate of parental involvement implementation is something I did not expect to find while conducting my research. It seems that when parental involvement implementation is low, teachers, parents and administrators report previous poor experiences and simply throw in the towel on any future attempts. Rather than reflecting on what worked or considering what they might have done differently. I find this to be very discouraging. As teachers and educators, we owe it to our communities to continually improve. Our future generations do not have the luxury of us failing our students or limiting the successes we might be able to achieve. The research is clear on parental involvement. It is our responsibilities as educators to find a way to make it work; If at first we don't succeed, we must try-try again; and then try again.

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