TEACHER SELFIES AND PARENT PORTRAITS: THE RELATIONSHIP

BETWEEN TEACHER COMMUNICATION AND SCHOOL-FAMILY

PARTNERSHIPS IN LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC SCHOOLS

By

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A DISSERTATION

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Schools

Research indicates that school-family partnerships improve student academic

achievement, yet forming those partnerships can be challenging in any school. While

the importance of those partnerships has been researched and recognized, schools

struggle with outreach and implementation, and school-family partnerships continue

to be elusive. In schools serving low socio-economic communities, the challenges for

implementation of School-Family partnerships are compounded. The additional

challenges faced by English Learner (EL) families exacerbate that issue.

In this descriptive study, three surveys were conducted at a rural, remote Pre-K

to 4th grade elementary school with 35% EL students, 67 Spanish-speaking parents,

and 98% low socio-economic status. Teachers were surveyed as well as two parent

groups: the parents of EL students, and parents identified as "involved" in either the

school's Parent Teacher Organization or School Site Council. Questions in all three

surveys centered around the role of the teacher and teacher communication in school-family partnerships and the role of the school and school leadership. Interviews conducted with EL parents further explored the questions on the survey. The samples were small and thus statistically under-powered for group comparisons. However, responses from English Learner families suggest that they may feel less of a partnership with the school than the other two groups. Some English Learner families felt that there was insufficient communication from the teacher and the school. Interviews conducted with two English Learner parents also provided evidence that they did not feel connected with the school or teacher and they did not feel that they had a partnership with their child's teacher and the school. Implications for practice are discussed.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate my study to my family and events that happened while I was in the U of O Doctoral Program. First, I give thanks to God for always directing my path (I don't always listen but He still directs). I dedicate this work and give thanks to my husband of 32 years, Jim Grissom, for tireless encouragement, some Statistics tutoring, and putting up with a lot of crazy. I dedicate this work to my parents, John and Reb Haynes, for providing six decades of wisdom, inspiration, and being incredible role models. I dedicate this work to our five amazing and enthusiastic children: Britt Forbes, Lauren Powell, Landon Grissom, Allison Baker, and Kathryn Grissom and sons-in-law Jack Forbes, Zach Powell, and David Baker. I would also like to thank Dr. Richard Bishop and Dr. Robert Haynes, two of my uncles who encouraged me and told me I wasn't too old to do this.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE SYNTHESIS

Families are the first educators of their children, and families continue to influence their children's learning and development during the school years and beyond, yet educators in low socio-economic schools and schools with a high percentage of English Learners may lament, "You know how our parents are…they don't care." The additional challenges facing English Learner families and families of low socio-economic status may marginalize those families when it comes to their children's education.

Policy makers and educators have studied school-family partnerships as a method of improving educational success and socially-accepted behavior for children. The children of parents who have a partnership with the school tend to perform at higher rates academically than students whose parents are less involved, resulting in positive results for schools (Majerus, 2011). Additional studies suggest that "building ties between families and schools are important for higher rates of school attendance" (Jung et al., 2020, p. 10). Unfortunately, low socio-economic status is associated with lower levels of family partnerships with schools. Low socio-economic status can impede or prevent access to basic vital resources, such as food and shelter; low educational backgrounds can also negatively affect that access. When families are struggling to provide basic vital resources, academic achievement can be adversely affected. These background factors create additional stress at home (Jeynes, 2007).

In schools serving students from low socio-economic backgrounds, reaching out to parents to improve those low levels of involvement becomes even more important, and it is the administrator (or leadership) who prioritizes that communication. "The evidence is now beyond dispute. When schools work together with families to support learning, children tend to succeed not just in school, but throughout life" (Henderson & Berla, 1994, p. 1). Given decades of research on the importance of School-Family Partnerships relative to student success, School-Family Partnerships have the potential to be the glue that bonds students and families to the schools (Dauber & Epstein, 1993). That is especially true for low socio-economic schools and additionally for low socio-economic schools with a high percentage of English Learner students and families. In order to serve the schools that are economically disadvantaged, school personnel, from school leaders to teachers to all staff, need to build relationships with families. The relationship between teachers and families may be the most important of those relationships and communication between teacher and families is critical. English Learner families may feel intimidated to engage in School-Family partnerships, possibly due to the perceived language barrier or the challenge of entering the bureaucracy of the school system (Housel, 2020, p. 187).

School Family Partnerships, especially in low socio-economic schools, face many barriers. Those barriers include: no time to move beyond the current state of poverty as resources are spent to address basic needs such as food, shelter, employment, child care, transportation, and elder care (Rubio, 2015). Those challenges can be barriers to school-family partnerships. Barriers to healthy school-family partnerships are most prevalent in low socio-economic schools;

those barriers exist between the school and the community the school serves (Rubio, 2015).

Effective teachers who communicate consistently and equitably can topple those barriers and

build the bridge from the school, thus making the school welcoming to parents, strengthening the

School-Family partnership, and improving student academic achievement and behavior.

Teachers who provide parents with the opportunity to make important contributions with their

time increase the likelihood that their requests will be met with approval from parents (Majerus,

2011). "School commitment to working effectively with families (e.g., engaging parents in

meaningful roles; offering substantive, specific, and positive feedback on the importance of

parents' contributions) was also identified as a critical component of effective school invitations"

(Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005, p. 110).

An additional challenge to the forming and strengthening of School-Family partnerships

can be the barrier of language. The percentage of English Learners in United States' schools is

ever-increasing and the diversity of English Learner families also increases (Protacio et al., 2020,

p. 211). For immigrant families, the norms and culture of the schools in their country of origin

may affect the perception of the role of parents in United States' schools (Housel, 2020, p. 187).

Epstein and Dauber (1991) found that when teachers make parent involvement part of

their regular teaching practice, parents increase their interactions with their children at home, feel

more positive about their abilities to help their children in the elementary grades, and rate the

teachers as better teachers overall. Students improve their attitudes and achievement.

In my dissertation, I examined the role of teacher' communication with parents in forming school-family partnerships. I also examined the importance of consistent teacher communication with families.

School-Family Partnerships

There are many benefits to forming School-Family partnerships. School-Family partnerships can improve student achievement and student attitude towards school (Epstein, 2015). The establishment of School-Family partnerships is a research-supported movement with numerous benefits for students. School-Family partnerships are associated with superior grade point averages and with improvements in standardized test scores, attendance, home and school behavior, social skills, and graduation rates (Epstein & Sanders 2006; Epstein, 2015, Lasater 2016). In order to truly be effective, those partnerships must reflect the diverse population of the school and community (Epstein, 2001).

As Epstein (2001) explains, families and schools are "ever-changing" and, just as there are changes in the family structure, there are changes in the structures of the schools that serve those families. School programs need to meet the evolving needs and interests of the students and families served at the school; families need to feel welcome as part of the whole school community. Increases in frequent and high-quality interactions between teachers and parents yield greater trust and respect and provide more support for student success (Baker et al., 2016). Families' special interests or needs must be met (e.g., information in understandable languages,

translations, interpreters at school meetings, teacher and school site communication) (Epstein 2001). It is the responsibility of school leadership to ensure families' needs are met.

School leadership sets the priorities for teachers. Communicating with parents in order to strengthen School-Family partnership should be a top priority (Rogers 2019). The classroom teacher is responsible for delivering specific communication with the parent regarding their child. Effective communication and collaboration is at the very core of effective teaching (Rogers, 2019). The effective teacher understands the importance of reaching out to parents, families, and communities; creates connections among school, family and community; and thus improves student behavior and overall academic success. School and family partnerships are a major component of a successful and effective school (Pansiri & Bulawa, 2014). Specifically, it is the teacher who reaches out to the family to form that partnership, to make that connection, and then, through continued communication, to strengthen that connection (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1997). Teacher attitudes toward parents are key in parents choosing to participate in their child's school. (Eccles & Harold, 1993). Hoover-Dempsey et al. noted that in one survey (conducted by Epstein in 1986) of elementary parents, for example, a comparison was made between teachers who engaged in many parent involvement activities (high-involvement teachers) with teachers who engaged in few such activities (low-involvement teachers); teachers were matched for experience, grade level, student achievement, and average parental education. Epstein found that parents whose children had high-involvement teachers were more positive about school and more aware of teachers' interest in their involvement than were parents with

low-involvement teachers. Further, the high-involvement teachers themselves, unlike their low-involvement counterparts, worked to involve all parents (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1997).

Different types of family and community involvement have been shown to result in student success in school, including positive attitudes toward school, better attendance and behavior in school, higher rates of homework completion, and better achievement in academic subjects. (Lunenburg 2002). The term "school, family, and community partnerships" is a better term than "parent involvement," for it recognizes schools as equals in the partnership and also encompasses the influence of all family members and of the many social and geographical communities that provide a context for the student's academic life (Lunenburg, 2002). In a 2019 empirical study of middle school teachers in four Georgia schools, Rogers found that the effective teacher communicates regularly with family members. and that the effective family member has greater educational aspirations for their children. That family member also has improved communication with their child and has a more positive attitude toward their child's teacher. That family member also has greater confidence in their abilities to help their children and has a better understanding of both formal and informal rules of the school and an appreciation and a greater knowledge about the importance of their role in their child's education (Rogers, 2019). Rogers found that effective teachers understood the importance of reaching out to parents, families, and communities to improve student behavior and overall academic success (Rogers, 2019). Ideally, the *effective teacher* and the *effective family and community member*

work in concert in order to improve student academic achievement and student behavior; however, families today face many barriers.

Barriers to Forming School-Family Partnerships

Barriers to School-Family partnerships in low SES schools are substantial. Low income families generally have different relationships or interactions with their child's teacher and the school as a whole than their middle-class counterparts (Pansiri & Bulawa, 2014). Throughout previous research, parents in middle-class communities were observed to act powerfully in their children's schools because they have relationships with each other centered on the school, and they possess the education and other resources that give them the confidence to relate to teachers as equals. In contrast, Warren et al. (2009) found that working-class parents and parents in lower SES schools are not typically connected to other parents at the same school, and these parents often lack the education and status to "stand up" to school authorities as equals. In that study, Warren et al. compared three schools in low-income, urban communities; those communities were in New Jersey, Illinois, and California. The schools were similar in that staff at each school was perceived as "warm" and "welcoming." The schools were similar in demographics and degrees of parent involvement but differed in what parent involvement looked like at each campus. At the New Jersey school, all staff were very welcoming and parents served as leaders, but parents did not realize the extent to which they could influence decisions. At the California campus, teachers were committed to the community, and parents signed a contract that included school-family partnerships. Parent involvement was significantly on the rise at that school. At

the Illinois school, parent leadership was systematically developed through a parent mentor program in which parents mentored other parents and worked with educators. Because those three schools are far-flung geographically, they each use different measurements to chart student achievement; at each campus, there has been marked improvement in student academic achievement (Warren et al., 2009).

Parents' beliefs about various issues can act as barriers to effective school-family partnerships. Family barriers that interfere with positive School-Family partnerships include: assuming a passive role in the educational process, distrust of educators, and educator unresponsiveness to family needs and wishes. Educator barriers include: fear of conflict with parents, concerns about families' abilities to assist with school-related issues, negative communication with families regarding a child's academic progress, and difficulty seeing parents as partners in the educational process. Finally, barriers related to the family–school relationship include: communication that occurs strictly when problems arise, lack of information and resources about how collaboration between families and schools should occur, lack of perspective-taking from both parties, failure to accept a partnership orientation, a win–lose attitude when presented with a conflict, and varying perceptions of a child's performance (Christenson, 2004). First, the way that parents view their role in their children's education is crucial. Parents who believe that their role is only to get children to school, which then takes over responsibility for their education, will not be willing to be actively involved in either school-based or home-based school-family partnerships (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). The belief

that parents have in their own ability to help their children succeed at school is also crucial to school-family partnerships (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

The reality of two-way teacher-parent communication is that there are both inconsistencies and barriers that thwart healthy communication. One barrier noted by parents/guardians is a lack or poor timing of communication between the school and home so that parents are unaware of school events and activities (Baker et al., 2016). For families for whom English is not the first language, language barriers may contribute to the difficulty of communication between school and home (Baker et al., 2016). "It is necessary for language minority parents to be involved in their children's education for reinforcement of native language development and for communication of high expectations and emotional support regarding academic achievement" (Lunenberg et al., 2002, p.11).

Parents with a low level of belief in their ability to help their children are likely to avoid contact with schools because of their view that such involvement will not bring about positive outcomes for their children (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Parents lacking confidence in helping their children, perhaps because the language of instruction is not their first language, feel they cannot communicate effectively with teachers. Another issue for parents is they may have had negative experiences with their children's previous schools, or negative experiences in their own educational background. (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Lack of confidence may also come from parents taking the view that they have not developed sufficient academic competence to

effectively help their children (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). There are other perceived barriers to school-family partnerships.

The perception that parents' have of their children can either be a barrier or an asset to school-family partnerships. Parents who believe children's intelligence is "fixed" and that school achievement is "mainly due to children being lucky enough to have high ability," may not see the benefit getting too involved in their children's education (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011, p. 39). They believe that "children's innate ability will set a limit on their achievement," so that such things as encouraging children to do their homework, or attending parent–teacher meetings at school, are viewed as a waste of time (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011, p.40). Alternatively, parents who believe that achievement at school depends as much on effort as ability, and that children's abilities can always be developed, are more likely to be positive about school-family partnerships (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

An additional barrier to school-family partnerships is parents' perceptions of the level of explicit and implicit invitations for involvement. When parents think that school-family partnerships are not valued by teachers or schools, they are less likely to get involved (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). The school and the teacher need to provide parents with data about all of the various events and activities that are taking place at school (Kolbert et al., 2014). When parents know what is going on at school, they tend to feel more connected and informed about what is going on in their children's lives (Kolbert, 2014). Moreover, improved communication ensures that parents and families are able to participate in events because they are informed in

advance (Kolbert et al., 2014). Therefore, parents' perceptions of invitations from schools are considered crucial in developing effective school-family partnerships.

Yet another possible barrier to successful school-family partnerships can be the parents' current life situation or educational level. Parents' level of education will influence their views on whether they have sufficient skills and knowledge to engage in different aspects of school-family partnerships (Green et al., 2007). For example, parents who did not complete high school may be diffident about helping their children with homework once they get to secondary school. Also, parents without university degrees may feel in some ways inferior to teachers, whom they may believe to be "better qualified than them" and therefore be reluctant to work closely with teachers. This situation is especially true when the community does not reflect the educational level of the faculty. Family circumstances can also be major barriers to school-family partnerships. Single parents and those with young or large families may find it more difficult to get involved in their children's education because of their caretaking responsibilities. Parents' work situations can also be a factor. When parents are unemployed, finances could be an issue as parents may not be able to afford a car or to pay babysitters in order to get to school meetings. For parents with jobs, whether both parents work, and the kind of jobs they have may be issues. When both parents work, there will be less time available for both home-based and school-based partnerships.

Parent Perceptions

Parents are most effectively involved when teachers actively encourage school-family partnerships (Epstein, 2001). Teachers with positive, facilitating attitudes toward involving parents encourage more parents to become involved and increase the effectiveness of school-family partnerships (Eccles & Harold 1993). Students from "dominated" minority groups can be either "empowered" or "disabled" by their interactions with educators (Henderson & Berla 1994). Similarly, schools which are welcoming to parents and make it clear that they value the partnership develop more effective school-family partnerships than schools that do not appear inviting to parents (Epstein, 2001). Parents are most involved when teachers actively encourage that involvement (Epstein & Dauber, 1991), and stronger teacher involvement practices are positively related to higher reading achievement among children (Epstein, 1991). Parents who record stronger beliefs in the school's efforts to involve them also believed strongly in the "goodness" of school (Dauber & Epstein, 1993). Similarly, Eccles and Harold (1994) reported that parents who held more positive views of the school's concern, accountability, and desire for parents' involvement were more involved in the school. When parents perceive that teachers are not open to involving parents, it acts as a major barrier to school-family partnerships.

Epstein's Parent Involvement Model

In Epstein's Parent Involvement Model, the home, school, and community are referred to as "overlapping spheres," which influence both children and the conditions and relationships in the three contexts. The internal model refers to the interactions and

patterns of influence that occur between individuals at home, at school, and in the

community (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002). Conversely, the external model is comprised of the

external contexts in which the students live (e.g., home, school, and community), and

the theory assumes that student achievement is enhanced when these external

contexts collaborate in promoting student achievement.

Sheldon and Epstein (2002) used longitudinal data from elementary and secondary

schools, analyses indicate that, regardless of schools' prior rates of discipline, the more family

and community involvement activities were implemented, the fewer students were disciplined by

being sent to principals' offices or given detention or in-school suspension. Both elementary and

secondary schools that "improved the quality of their partnership programs" reported fewer

discipline issues (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002).

The results of the Sheldon and Epstein (2002) longitudinal study suggest that creating

more connections and greater cooperation among the school, family, and community contexts

may be one way for schools to improve student behavior and school discipline. In many schools,

there are efforts to promote improved school-family partnerships through a variety of methods

centered on teacher-parent communication. Recent experimental research has documented how

"two-way teacher-parent communication can lead to greater parental involvement, improved

student engagement and academic achievement" (Kraft, 2014). Sadly, there are barriers to

communication between teachers and the families they serve.

<center>**CHAPTER II**</center>

<center>**METHODS**</center>

I conducted a convergent parallel mixed methods descriptive case study to investigate educators' methods of communication and families' perceptions of educator communication and how that communication affects school-family partnerships in a TK-4th grade school serving a community with substantial poverty and trauma challenges. A convergent parallel mixed methods study is one in which the researcher concurrently conducts the quantitative and qualitative elements in the same phase of the research process, weighs the methods equally, analyzes the two components independently, and interprets the results together (Creswell & Pablo-Clark, 2011). I researched the types of teacher communication parents find most and least useful for encouraging them to work in partnership with the school. I surveyed parents to find what methods of communication from teachers are most effective; I surveyed teachers and recorded their methods of communication with families. I conducted a focus group of parents online (via Zoom) to discuss methods of teacher communication. The focus group of parents was parents from the school's English Learner Advisory Council (ELAC). I attempted to survey the parents of chronically absent students and students with discipline issues but was unsuccessful in getting their input. Only the ELAC parents expressed interest in participating in a Focus Group.

Qualitative Methods

"A qualitative study is defined as a query or study in the understanding of a social or human issue, based on developing a complex narrative, including relevant details, and typically

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conducted in a natural setting" (Creswell, 1994). In a qualitative study, the findings are not

arrived at by statistical methods. Rather, qualitative research can refer to life experiences,

behaviors, and emotions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). There are some benefits of using qualitative

research approaches and methods. A qualitative research approach produces a detailed

description of participants' feelings, opinions, and experiences and interprets the meanings of

their actions (Denzin, 1989). A qualitative research approach enables a researcher to analyze

different people's voices, meanings, and events.

There are also disadvantages to qualitative research. One shortcoming of qualitative

research is that qualitative research typically involves a smaller sample size, which could affect

generalizability (Harry & Lipsky, 2014; Thompson, 2011). For the purposes of this study,

qualitative approaches allowed me to interview various sub-groups of parents and gain

understanding of their perspectives on school-family partnerships and teacher communication

in focus groups. Focus groups may be used to explore new research areas, explore a topic that

is difficult to observe, explore a topic that does not lend itself to observational techniques,

explore sensitive topics, when the researcher wants to collect a concentrated set of observations

in a short time span, or to ascertain perspectives and experiences from people on a topic,

particularly when these are people who might otherwise be marginalized. In combination with

other methods, focus groups might help to clarify research findings gleaned using quantitative

approaches. Focus groups were an appropriate data collection method for this study because

the perspectives of different groups of parents, with a particular focus on parents who might otherwise be marginalized, needed to be heard.

Quantitative Methods

Quantitative research involves the collecting, statistical analyzing, interpreting, and writing the results of a study. The focus of quantitative research is measuring something or variables that exist (Creswell, 2002). Quantitative methods follow deductive logic, seek regularities in human lives, and separate the social world into variables. Those variables can be represented numerically (as frequencies or rate, for example). Associations between those variables can be explored by statistical techniques, then assessed through researchers' systematic measurement (Payne & Payne, 2004). Quantitative findings are frequently generalized to a whole population or a sub-population because they often include larger, randomly-selected samples (Carr, 1994) in contrast to the purposive sampling common in qualitative approaches. There are disadvantages to quantitative research in that it leaves out the common meanings of social phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). It measures variables at a specific moment in time and disregards whether the moment was typical (Schofield, 2007).

Combining qualitative and quantitative research in a convergent parallel mixed methods study lessened the disadvantages of each method and provided both in-depth experiential and statistical data**.**

Setting and Participants

The study took place at the end of the 2020-2021 school year at a rural, remote TK-4th grade school serving a community with substantial poverty and trauma challenges located in the northeast corner of Los Angeles County in California. The elementary school is one of three schools located in the district in an unincorporated area of Los Angeles County. During the 2020-2021 school year, the school served 685 students from transitional kindergarten through fourth grade, as determined by the October 2020 pupil count on the California Department of Education website. The school currently has 657 students enrolled. The school's demographics in 2020 included 79% Hispanic, 9.4% White, 12.0% African-American, with 31.8% English Learners (with 45.5% English Learners in First Grade), 10.35% Students with Disabilities, 4.1 % Homeless Students and 2.58% Foster Youth. The elementary school is a school-wide Title I site with 100% participation in the free lunch program. A significant proportion of the school population (93%) lives below the poverty level. The elementary school had a transient rate of 4.4% of the students who were enrolled in grades 2-4 for the 2020-2021 school year. In the district, 1% of parents are college graduates and 46% are high school graduates. That statistic is quite different, of course, than the educational level of the teachers. Every teacher at the school is fully credentialed and is teaching within their subject matter; 35% of the teachers have Master's Degrees.

The elementary school services 213 English Language Learners (EL) and 35 fluent English Language Learners (EL). Participants in the Migrant Education program comprise less

than 1% of the student body. Spanish is the primary language of English Learner and Migrant students. To service those EL students, the elementary school has 33 teachers who hold specialty credentials. They either have a BCLAD, CLAD, SB1969/395 certificate, or SDAIE/ELD teaching authorization. In addition, the school employs two full-time bilingual instructional aides. According to the website citydata.com, 30.1% of community residents had an income below the poverty level, representing a poverty level 55.9% greater than the poverty level of 13.3% across the entire state of California.

All teachers employed at the school and parents from five different sub-groups who had students enrolled in the school during the 2020-2021 School Year were invited to participate. Parent participants were invited from the following sub-groups: parents of English learners, parents active in the school's Parent-Teacher Organization, parents on the School Site Council, parents of students with a history of chronic absenteeism, and parents whose students had a high percentage of discipline issues were invited to participate.

Data Collection

Data were collected via online survey and focus groups. Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous. All 35 teachers at the elementary school were asked to participate in the Teacher Survey. Ultimately, slightly more than half of the teachers completed the survey, with a response rate of 60%. Parents were recruited from the English Learner Advisory Council, Parent-Teacher Organization, and School Site Council in an e-mail containing a link to a survey using the online survey tool Survey Monkey. In addition, the parents of students who were

chronically absent and those whose students had a high percentage of discipline issues were determined using the school database, and those parents received an e-mail invitation to participate in the study, again containing the link to Survey Monkey. The survey link sent to each of the above listed subgroups had a random code in the title of the survey so that the P.I. could determine the subgroup of parents from which the survey came, while also providing participant anonymity. In all, 18 parents completed the survey. The specific participation rates of parents from the different sub-groups are reported in the Results chapter.

Survey Instruments

Two surveys, developed by The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to assess the outreach efforts of a school or district based on the perceptions of school personnel and families, were used in this study. According to the CDE, this is a free resource for any school or district to use to evaluate and improve family-school-community partnering (FSCP), aligned with the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships (PTA, 2008). The CDE explained that survey items were selected from surveys previously developed by education organizations, including the goals and indicators of the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships, the Kansas Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC), and the Flamboyan Foundation. A team from the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) separately selected questions applicable to education in Colorado for each of the standards. Items selected by multiple reviewers were compiled into family and staff surveys. A "crosswalk" of the survey items and indicators for each standard was conducted to ensure alignment. National and state subject-matter experts, including the State

Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education (SACPIE) provided feedback on the face validity, content, and wording of the selected questions. The CDE team also received approval from the Educational Data Advisory Committee (EDAC). Those surveys were selected because of the parallel structure of the teacher survey and the parent survey and because their purpose aligned well with this dissertation.

Focus Groups

To supplement the data collected through the surveys, I was going to conduct a focus group of parents representing English Learners. In that focus group, I was going to use semi-structured interview protocols to further explore themes that emerged from the surveys. The focus group was going to meet on Zoom, with the Zoom setting set for participants to enter with their cameras off. Upon entry, the P.I. would rename the participants as A, B, C, and so on, on their screens, in an effort to maintain confidentiality.

Unfortunately, despite repeated efforts to recruit participants, representatives from only two families volunteered to participate in the focus group, both recruited from parents of English learners. Plans changed again, however, when one parent arrived late, arriving after the first parent had already been interviewed. As a result, I held two interviews, rather than focus groups, recruited from parents of English Learners. In both, the following questions were discussed and answered: (a) What communication approaches are effective at making you feel that you are a valuable part of your child's education? and (b) What communication approaches are ineffective at improving the School-Family partnership?

Procedures to Ensure the Protection of Human Subjects

The Informed Consent form was sent out to each potential participant electronically with the survey link. The survey to parents was distributed electronically using e-mail addresses. The e-mail addresses were from the District database; the District granted permission to use the database information to acquire parent e-mail addresses, as the District viewed the results of this study as beneficial information for the District to strengthen School-Family partnerships. In an effort to include all sub-groups, the survey link was sent to members of the English Learner Advisory Council (ELAC), members of the School Site Council (SSC), PTO parents, parents of children who were chronically absent, and parents who had been summoned to school because of a discipline issue with their child. The surveys were completed anonymously. A question at the end of the survey asked: *Would you be interested in participating in a Focus Group on Zoom to further discus the relationship between Teacher Communication and School-Family partnerships?* Once the parent survey was administered, the teachers received a similar anonymous survey regarding their communication with parents. The teachers were not invited to a Focus Group but they were asked an open-ended question: *Do you have any other thoughts about School-Family partnerships or communication with families?* Both surveys were offered electronically on Survey Monkey, and the parent survey was offered in English and Spanish.

The required elements of informed consent were conveyed to participants in an e-mail containing the informed consent document and the link to the survey. The informed consent document was also read on Zoom prior to the interviews beginning. The informed consent

document was read in Spanish to Spanish-speaking participants by the translator. Throughout the 2020-2021 school year, families of students attending the elementary school might have experienced technological barriers to participating in the study; however, the school district has provided every student with a device (Chromebook or laptop) and as many hotspots as needed for families to be connected. Because the district had provided technology to all families, connectivity to both take the survey and participate in the Focus Group was unlikely to have been a challenge.

The P.I. reviewed the consent procedures for the focus group at the start of the session. The translator translated the consent procedures. The translator, who is CITI certified, is employed as a translator with the school district and has established trust and rapport with many of the Spanish-speaking families. The translator read the consent procedures for the parents who had signed up to participate in the focus group. Because the two parents participated at different times, the translator read the consent procedures for each individually prior to the start of the interview. Every measure was taken to protect participants' privacy including turning cameras off while on Zoom, renaming participants A and B, and asking participants to refrain from using student or teacher names, and requesting that participants maintain confidentiality of the interview.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Each of the groups of participants (teachers, parents from the PTO, and parents of English Learner students) were sent an invitation to complete an online survey. In all, 18 teachers, 3 parents from the PTO, and 16 parents of English Learner students completed the survey. The surveys were worded slightly differently for parents than they were for teachers, but were designed to solicit input about the same topics. To help make the results of the surveys more interpretable, I have organized them into four different thematic groups, based on the focus area of the questions. These thematic groups are based on my own interpretation of the content of the survey questions rather than being statistically derived. These results are presented below.

Teacher Survey

In all, 18 teachers completed the survey out of the 30 teachers invited to complete it. This represents a response rate of 60 %. The results of the Teacher Survey related to teachers communicating with families are presented in Table 1. These results came from questions 1, 7, 11, 12, 14, 17, and 18 on the survey. Generally speaking, teachers agree or strongly agree that they have good relationships with their students' families and that they communicate well with those families. The teachers also agreed that they provide guidance to their students' families … (provide a few summary statements about the survey results based on the Total for the table).

Table 1

The Teachers Communicate with Families (Teacher Survey)

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have good relationships with my students' families.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (5.56%)	**11** **(61%)**	6 (33%)
I communicate with families in multiple ways, including calls, texts, or emails.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	**10** **(55.56%)**	8 (44.44%)
I provide information or guidance to families about how they can support their children's learning at home.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (11.11%)	**12** **(66.67%)**	4 (22.22%)
I frequently communicate with families about what their child is learning in my classroom.	0 (0%)	2 (11.11%)	3 (16.67%)	**9** **(50.00%)**	4 (22.22%)
I share student work with families.	0 (0%)	1 (5.65%)	1 (5.56%)	**8** **(44.44%)**	**8** **(44.44%)**
I frequently invite family members to volunteer in my classroom or at the school.	1 (5.56%)	5 (27.78)	**12** **(66.67)**	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
I share with family members how to help their child with homework or practice academic skills at home.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	**16** **(88.89%)**	2 (11.11%)
TOTALS	1 (0.8%)	8 (6.32%)	19 (15.08%)	**66** **(52.4%)**	32 (25.4%)

NOTE: Bolded text indicates the most frequently selected response.

The results of the Teacher Survey related to teachers' beliefs about the degree to which the school is welcoming to families are presented in Table 2. These results came from questions 2, 6, 8, 9, 16, and 25 on the survey. Generally speaking, teachers agreed that they see their

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colleagues interacting with families in a positive way. A majority of teachers agree that it is easy

for families to meet with the principal, counselors, or teachers. Teachers were split (agree or

disagree) regarding there being a process in place to welcome and orient new and incoming

students and families. Teachers mostly disagreed that there was a family liaison employed by the

school to bridge cultural and language differences.

Table 2

The School is Welcoming to Families (Teacher Survey)

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I see my colleagues consistently interact with families in a positive way.	0 (0%)	2 (11%)	3 (17%)	**11** **(61%)**	2 (11%)
At my school, a family liaison helps teachers connect to families and bridge barriers of language and culture.	1 (5.56%)	**6** **(33.33%)**	5 (27.78%)	4 (22.22%)	2 (11.11%)
The school does an annual survey of families to get their ideas about programs, policies, issues, or concerns.	0 (0%)	2, (11.11%)	5 (27.78%)	**8** **(44.44%)**	3 (16.67%)
It is easy for families to meet with the principal, teachers, or counselors.	1 (5.56%)	2 (11.11%)	2 (11.11%)	**10** **(55.56%)**	5 (27.78%)
The school reports to parents about student and school progress.	0 (0%)	2 (11.11%)	1 (5.56%)	**13** **(72.22%)**	2 (11.11%)
The school has a process in place to welcome and orient new and incoming students and families.	2 (11.11%)	**6** **(33.33%)**	3 (16.67%)	**7** **(38.89%)**	0 (0%)
TOTALS	4 (3.7%)	20 (18.5%)	19 (17.5%)	**53** **(49.0%)**	14 (12.9%)

NOTE: Bolded text indicates the most frequently selected response.

The results of the Teacher Survey related to teachers' beliefs about the degree to which opportunities for families to become involved reflect the diversity of families are presented in Table 3. These results came from questions 3, 4, 5, 24, 27, and 30 on the survey. Generally speaking, teachers agree that the school provides flexible volunteer opportunities for families (e.g., during, before, and after school hours, various types of tasks). Teachers also agree that the school's policies and programs reflect, respect, and value the diversity of the families in the community. Teachers are also of the belief that the school removes economic or other obstacles for family participation at school events (e.g., by providing transportation, child activities for siblings, meals). Most teachers disagree regarding collaboration between teachers and families to improve student learning and achievement. The majority of teachers do not believe that committees and groups, such as PTO, actively recruit families from various backgrounds that reflect the diversity of the school community. Overall, most of the teachers agreed that the diversity of families is reflected in involvement opportunities.

Table 3

Involvement Opportunities Reflect the Diversity of Families (Teacher Survey)

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The school provides flexible volunteer opportunities for families (e.g., during, before, and after school hours, various types of tasks).	0 (0%)	4 (22%)	4 (22%)	4 (22%)	**6** **(33.33%)**

The school's policies and programs reflect, respect, and value the diversity of the families in the community.	0 (0%)	1 (6%)	4 (22%)	6 (33.33%)	**7** **(38.89%)**
The school removes economic or other obstacles for family participation at school events (e.g., by providing transportation, child activities for siblings, meals).	0 (0.0%)	2 (11.11%)	3 (16.67%)	6 (33.33%)	**7** **(38.89%)**
Families and staff have opportunities to learn together how to collaborate to improve student achievement.	1 (5.56%)	**7** **(38.89%)**	2 (11.11%)	**7** **(38.89%)**	1 (5.56%)
The school's racial and cultural diversity is recognized and openly discussed in a constructive way that includes staff and families (e.g., at family group and faculty meetings, school council meetings, and discussion groups.	0 (0.0%)	4 (22.22%)	5 (27.78%)	**7** **(38.89%)**	2 (11.11%)
School committees (such as PTO) actively recruit families from various backgrounds that reflect the diversity of the school community.	0 (0.0%)	6 (33.33%)	**8** **(44.44%)**	3 (16.67%)	1 (5.56%)
TOTALS	1 (.93%)	20 (18.51%)	26 (24.07%)	**33** **(30.56%)**	28 (25.93%)

NOTE: Bolded text indicates the most frequently selected response.

The results of the Teacher Survey related to teachers' beliefs about the degree to which families are empowered are presented in Table 4. These results came from questions 10, 15, 20, 21, 23, and 26 on the survey. Generally speaking, teachers agree that families are encouraged to bring up issues or concerns. Teachers also agree that the school provides information to families regarding their rights and responsibilities under federal and state education laws and that families are part of the decision-making process about the placement of their student in school programs.

There is less agreement amongst teachers on the issue of a clear written process for resolving

families' complaints or problems with the school, and the abilities of families to use that process.

Table 4

Families are Empowered (Teacher Survey)

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Families are encouraged to bring up issues or concerns.	0 (0.0%)	1 (5.65%)	2 (11.11%)	**10 (55.56%)**	5 (27.78%)
Student achievement data are shared with families in ways that solicit their ideas about how to improve achievement.	0 (0.00%)	**7 (38.89%)**	6 (33.33%)	4 (22.22%)	1 (5.56%)
The school helps families learn how the school system works and how to advocate for their child.	0 (0.0%)	5 (27.78%)	**9 (50.00%)**	2 (11.11%)	2 (11.11%)
The school provides information to families about their rights and responsibilities under federal and state education laws.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (16.73%)	**11 (61.11%)**	4 (22.22%)
There is a clear written process for resolving families' complaints or problems with the school, and families know how to use it.	3 (16.67%)	4 (22.22%)	**8 (44.44%)**	2 (11.11%)	1 (5.56%)
Families are part of the decision-making process about student placement in school programs.	1 (5.56%)	1 (5.56%)	7 (38.89%)	**8 (44.44%)**	1 (5.56%)

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	4	18	35	**37**	14
TOTALS	(3.7%)	(16.67%)	(32.4%)	**(34.25%)**	(12.97%)

NOTE: Bolded text indicates the most frequently selected response.

The results of the Teacher Survey related to teachers' beliefs about the degree to which the school or teachers provide parents with educational or community resources are presented in Table 5. These results came from questions 13, 19, 22, 28, 29, and 31 on the survey. Generally speaking, teachers agree that families get information about academic and after-school programs and how to apply for them. The teachers agreed that they generally communicate information to families about available resources, including recreation and community resources. About one-third of the teachers agreed that they or the school provide resources, yet one-fourth of the teachers disagreed.

Table 5

School or Teacher Provides Educational or Community Resources (Teacher Survey)

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Programs and activities for families focus on student achievement by helping families understand what their children are learning.	0 (0.0%)	3 (16.67%)	**8** **(44.44%)**	5 (27.78%)	2 (11.11%)
Families get information about academic and after-school programs for students and how to apply for them.	0 (0.0%)	2 (11.11%)	1 (5.56%)	**10** **(55.56%)**	5 (27.78%)
I frequently send families information about educational resources available to them.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.00%)	3 (16.73%)	**11** **(61.11%)**	4 (22.22%)
At workshops and other information sessions, parents learn how to ask the right questions about their child's progress.	1 (5.56%)	7 (38.89%)	**10** **(55.56%)**	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Family Leadership training is offered, either by the school or by community groups in collaboration with the school.	1 (5.56%)	**9** **(50.00%)**	6 (33.33%)	2 (11.11%)	0 (0.0%)
Counselors or teachers refer families to education and recreation programs in the community that can help their children.	0 (0.0%)	3 (16.67%)	**6** **(33.33%)**	**6** **(33.33%)**	3 (16.67%)
TOTALS	2 (1.85%)	24 (22.22%)	3 (31.49%)	**34** **(31.49%)**	14 (12.97%)

NOTE: Bolded text indicates the most frequently selected response.

In addition to the selected-response questions, the teacher survey provided an opportunity for teachers to share any thoughts they had about School-Family partnerships. Of the 18 Teachers who completed the survey, six answered and twelve participants skipped the question. These are their responses:

TEACHER A: Since being at Vista, the school-family relationships have not been great. I seemed to have better parent communication when we were an open campus. I was able to quickly speak to the parents as they dropped off their student. I really miss this part of having a closed campus.

TEACHER B: In the last 2-3 years, the school-family communication has skipped the teachers. We, as teachers, know nothing of what is going on at the school or district level. The communication to the teachers is getting worse. It is very difficult for the teachers to communicate to the parents when we have no idea what is going on. I believe this is a major piece that is missing lately. I hear teachers complain that they do not want to give wrong information to parents when they have not received the information themselves.

TEACHER C: I feel that families and staff aren't aware of programs for students. I also feel that a lot of programs exclude younger students when early intervention would make a huge difference. I think our school can improve the partnership between families and the school.

TEACHER D: The more you get parents involved the more success the students will have. I think our school could improve it a little or let teachers know what the office is doing to improve it. Thank you.

TEACHER E: Virtual opportunities for parents to participate via zoom facilitated communication during the pandemic and hopefully beyond.

TEACHER F: It would be wonderful if we had something once a month for new families. Perhaps on the day of the PTO meeting. Parents welcomed to come and have lunch with their child, invited to sit in the classroom for an hour, maybe having a roving sub or admin take the teacher's class for half an hour so the teacher may meet with the parent, review the I-ready scores (because hopefully that gets done in the first couple of days), discuss questions and concerns. Basically a parent/teacher conference. Go over expectations of the grade level and standards. Time it so the parent is right there to join in with the PTO meeting. A day to embrace the parents into our community....

PTO Parent Survey

In all, 3 parents completed the survey out of the 12 of PTO parents invited to complete it. This represents a response rate of 25 %. All three participating parents from this group were mothers of students enrolled at the school. The results of the PTO Parent Survey related to teachers communicating with families are presented in Table 6. These results came from questions 1, 7, 11, 12, 14, 17, and 18 on the survey. Generally speaking, PTO parents either agreed or strongly agreed that teachers communicate with families. The PTO parents' responses were positive regarding communication and they feel equipped to help their children at home. They also felt the school provided information as needed.

Table 6

The Teachers Communicate with Families (PTO Parents)

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have a good relationship with my child's teacher.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (33.33%)	1 (33.33%)	1 (33.33%)
The school ensures I have access to the information shared at school events and activities (e.g. providing explanation or translation as needed).	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (66.67%)	1 (33.33%)
I receive help or information from my child's teacher(s) about how I can support my child's learning at home.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (66.67%)	1 (33.33%)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The school keeps me well informed and gives me opportunity to ask about my child's progress.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (33.33%)	2 (66.67%)
The school shares and explains my child's performance on state assessments.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (33.33%)	1 (33.33%)	1 (33.33%)
I frequently check the schoolwork my child brings home.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (66.67%)	1 (33.3%)
I have received training and support from the school and my child's teacher on how to review and discuss my child's homework.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (66.67%)	0 (0%)	1 (33.33%)
TOTALS	0	0	4 (19.05%)	9 (42.85%)	8 (38.1%)

NOTE: Bolded text indicates the most frequently selected response.

The results of the PTO Parent Survey related to teachers' beliefs about the degree to which the school is welcoming to families are presented in Table 7. These results came from questions 2, 6, 8, 9, 16, and 25 on the survey. Generally speaking, PTO parents agreed or strongly agreed that the school is welcoming. The school shares information and also cares about the opinions of the parents, per the PTO parents' responses.

Table 7

The School Welcomes Families (PTO Parents)

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel welcome at the school.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (66.67%)	1 (33.3%)
The school makes it easier for my family to attend school activities by providing transportation, activities for siblings, meals, etc.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (33.33%)	1 (33.33%)	1 (33.33%)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The school communicates with me in multiple ways (e.g., calls, texts, notes, letters, or emails).	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (33.33%)	**2 (66.67%)**
The school asks my opinion about issues and concerns.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	**2 (66.67%)**	1 (33.33)
The school shares information about overall school progress and how my family can support improvements.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	**2 (66.67%)**	1 (33.33%)
I have the opportunity to participate in advisory or advocacy groups (e.g., PTA, accountability committees) to promote student success.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	**2 (66.67%)**	1, (33.33%)
TOTALS	0	0	1 (5.55%)	**10 (55.55%)**	7 (38.88%)

NOTE: Bolded text indicates the most frequently selected response.

The results of the PTO Parent Survey related to parents' beliefs about the degree to which opportunities for families to become involved reflect the diversity of families are presented in Table 8. These results came from questions 3, 4, 5, 24, 27, and 30 on the survey. Generally speaking, PTO parents agree or strongly agree that involvement opportunities at school reflect the diversity of the community. They agree that the recruitment of committee members reflects the diversity of the community and that the school staff members respect that diversity.

Table 8

Involvement Opportunities Reflect the Diversity of Families (PTO Parents)

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

I am invited by my child's teacher(s) to volunteer in their classroom or at the school.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	**2** **(66.67%)**	0 (0%)	1 (33.33%)
The school provides multiple volunteer opportunities that fit my schedule and interests (e.g., during, before, or after school hours; various types of tasks).	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (33.33%)	1 (33.33%)	1 (33.33%)
School staff respect and value the diversity of the families in the school.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	**2** **(66.67%)**	1 (33.33%)
My family has received information on how to help improve overall school progress.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (33.33%)	1 (33.33%)	1 (33.33%)
The school's racial and cultural diversity is recognized and openly discussed in a constructive way that includes staff and families (e.g., at family group and faculty meetings, school council meetings, and discussion groups.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	**2** **(66.67%)**	0 (0.00%)	1 (33.33%)
School committees (such as PTO) actively recruit families from various backgrounds that reflect the diversity of the school community.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (33.33%)	1 (33.33%)	1 (33.33%)
TOTALS	0	0	**7** **(38.88%)**	5 (27.77%)	6 (33.33%)

NOTE: Bolded text indicates the most frequently selected response.

The results of the PTO Parent Survey related to parents' beliefs about the degree to which families are empowered are presented in Table 4. These results came from questions 10, 15, 20, 21, 23, and 26 on the survey. Generally speaking, PTO parents either agree or strongly agree that families are empowered. The PTO parents believe that it is easy to bring up concerns to school staff and that they are part of the decision-making process.

Table 9

Families are Empowered (PTO Parents)

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is easy for parents to bring up issues or concerns with the principal, teachers, or counselors.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (33.33%)	**2** **(66.67%)**
The school explains how state assessment results are used to help my child learn.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	**2** **(66.67%)**	1 (33.33%)
The school provides training and information about how the school system works and how to be an effective advocate for my child.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	**2** **(66.67%)**	0 (0%)	1 (33.33%)
The school helps me understand my rights and responsibilities and my child's rights and responsibilities under federal and state education laws.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	**2** **(66.67%)**	1 (33.33%)
There is a clear written process for resolving families' complaints or problems with the school, and I know how to use it.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (33.33%)	1 (33.33%)	1 (33.33%)
I have the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process about my child's placement in school programs.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	**2** **(66.67%)**	1 (33.33%)
TOTALS	0	0	3 (16.66%)	**8** **(44.44%)**	7 (38.88%)

NOTE: Bolded text indicates the most frequently selected response.

The results of the PTO Parent Survey related to parents' beliefs about the degree to which

the school or teachers provide parents with educational or community resources are presented in

Table 10. These results came from questions 13, 19, 22, 28, 29, and 31 on the survey. Generally

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speaking, PTO parents believe that the school connects them to resources in the community.

They understand what is expected for their children to be successful at school. They also agree

that the school provides information about resources but also guidance in applying for programs

and resources.

Table 10

School or Teacher provides Educational or Community Resources (PTO Parents)

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I understand what is expected of my child to be successful at school.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	**2 (66.67%)**	1 (33.33%)
I receive information about after-school programs and how to apply for them.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	**2 (66.67%)**	1 (33.33%)
I frequently receive information from the school about how to access educational resources for my child or my family.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (33.33%)	1 (33.33%)	1 (33.33%)
At workshops and other information sessions, my family learns how to ask the right questions about my child's progress and placement.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (33.33%)	1 (33.33%)	1 (33.33%)
Family Leadership training is offered, either by the school or by community groups in collaboration with the school.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	**2 (66.67%)**	0 (0%)	1 (33.33%)
The school connects my family to education and recreation resources in the community that can help their children.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (33.33%)	1 (33.33%)	1 (33.33%)
TOTALS	0	0	5 (27.77%)	**7 (38.88%)**	6 (33.33%)

NOTE: Bolded text indicates the most frequently selected response.

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EL Parent Survey

In all, 15 parents of English language learners completed the survey out of the 20 invited to complete it. This represents a response rate of 75 %. The results of the EL Parent Survey related to teachers communicating with families are presented in Table 11. These results came from questions 1, 7, 11, 12, 14, 17, and 18 on the survey. Generally speaking, EL parents agree or strongly agree that teachers communicate with families. Most of the EL parents believed that they have a good relationship with their child's teacher. They also believed that the school provides support and shares information.

Table 11

The Teachers Communicate with Families (EL Student Parents)

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have a good relationship with my child's teacher	1 (6.67%)	1 (6.67%)	3 (20.00%)	**6** **(40.00%)**	4 (26.67%)
The school ensures I have access to the information shared at school events and activities (e.g. providing explanation or translation as needed).	0 (0%)	2 (13.33%)	2 (13.33%)	**6** **(40.00%)**	5 (33.33%)
I receive help or information from my child's teacher(s) about how I can support my child's learning at home.	0 (0%)	4 (26.67%)	1 (6.67%)	3 (20.00%)	**7** **(46.67%)**
The school keeps me well informed and gives me opportunity to ask about my child's progress.	0 (0%)	1 (6.67%)	3 (20.00%)	**6** **(40.00%)**	5 (33.33%)
The school shares and explains my child's performance on state assessments.	0 (0%)	1 (6.67%)	1 (6.67%)	**10** **(66.67%)**	3 (20.00%)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I frequently check the schoolwork my child brings home.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7 (46.67%)	**8 (53.33%)**
I have received training and support from the school and my child's teacher on how to review and discuss my child's homework.	0 (0%)	3 (20.00%)	1 (6.67%)	**6 (40.00%)**	5 (33.33%)
TOTALS	1 (.95%)	12 (11.4%)	11 (10.47%)	**44 (41.9%)**	37 (35.24%)

NOTE: Bolded text indicates the most frequently selected response.

The results of the EL Parent Survey related to teachers' beliefs about the degree to which the school is welcoming to families are presented in Table 12. These results came from questions 2, 6, 8, 9, 16, and 25 on the survey. Generally speaking, EL parents feel welcome at school although two of the respondents did not feel welcome. Three of the respondents disagreed that the school shares information about overall school progress and how my family can support improvements.

Table 12

The School Welcomes Families (Parents of EL Students)

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel welcome at the school.	1 (6.67%)	1 (6.67%)	1 (6.67%)	**7 (46.67%)**	5 (33.33%)
The school makes it easier for my family to attend school activities by providing transportation, activities for siblings, meals, etc.	0 (0%)	1 (6.67%)	4 (26.67%)	**5 (33.33%)**	**5 (33.33%)**

The school communicates with me in multiple ways (e.g., calls, texts, notes, letters, or emails).	0 (0%)	1 (6.67%)	0 (0.00%)	**8 (53.33%)**	6 (40.00%)
The school asks my opinion about issues and concerns.	1 (6.67%)	0 (0%)	5 (33.33%)	**7 (46.67%)**	2 (13.33)
The school shares information about overall school progress and how my family can support improvements.	0 (0%)	3 (20.00%)	2 (13.33%)	**8 (53.33%)**	2 (13.33%)
I have the opportunity to participate in advisory or advocacy groups (e.g., PTA, accountability committees) to promote student success.	1 (6.67%)	1 (6.67%)	3 (20.00%)	**7 (46.67%)**	3 (20.00%)
TOTALS	3 (3.33%)	7 (7.77%)	15 (16.66%)	**42 (46.6%)**	23 (25.55%)

NOTE: Bolded text indicates the most frequently selected response.

The results of the EL Parent Survey related to teachers' beliefs about the degree to which opportunities for families to become involved reflect the diversity of families are presented in Table 13. These results came from questions 3, 4, 5, 24, 27, and 30 on the survey. Generally speaking, parents of EL students agree that the opportunities to become involved at school reflect the diversity of families. Several of the EL families disagreed that they were invited by their child's teacher to volunteer in the classroom.

Table 13

Involvement Opportunities Reflect the Diversity of Families (Parents of EL Students)

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am invited by my child's teacher(s) to volunteer in their classroom or at the school.	1 (6.67%)	3 (20.00%)	4 (26.67%)	**6** **(40.00%)**	1 (6.67%)
The school provides multiple volunteer opportunities that fit my schedule and interests (e.g. during, before, or after school hours; various types of tasks).	1 (6.67%)	0 (0%)	5 (33.33%)	**6** **(40.00%)**	3 (20.00%)
School staff respect and value the diversity of the families in the school.	1 (6.67%)	0 (0%)	3 (20.00%)	**7** **(46.67%)**	4 (26.67%)
My family has received information on how to help improve overall school progress.	0 (0%)	2 (13.33%)	2 (13.33%)	**8** **(53.33%)**	3 (20.00)
The school's racial and cultural diversity is recognized and openly discussed in a constructive way that includes staff and families (e.g., at family group and faculty meetings, school council meetings, and discussion groups.	0 (0%)	1 (6.67%)	4 (26.67%)	**9** **(60.00)**	1 (6.67%)
School committees (such as PTO) actively recruit families from various backgrounds that reflect the diversity of the school community.	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (13.33%)	**10** **(66.67%)**	3 (20.00%)
TOTALS	3 (3.33%)	6 (6.66%)	20 (22.22%)	**46** **(51.11%)**	15 (16.66%)

NOTE: Bolded text indicates the most frequently selected response.

The results of the EL Parent Survey related to teachers' beliefs about the degree to which families are empowered are presented in Table 14. These results came from questions 10, 15, 20,

21, 23, and 26 on the survey. Generally speaking, parents of EL students believe that families are

empowered; the EL families agree that they are part of the decision-making process in their

child's placement in academic programs. They also believe that it is easy for them to bring up

issues or concerns with the school staff.

Table 14

Families are Empowered (Parents of EL Students)

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is easy for parents to bring up issues or concerns with the principal, teachers, or counselors.	0 (0%)	1 (6.67%)	5 (33.33%)	**7 (46.67%)**	2 (13.33%)
The school explains how state assessment results are used to help my child learn.	0 (0%)	2 (13.33%)	2 (13.33%)	**9 (60.00%)**	2 (13.33%)
The school provides training and information about how the school system works and how to be an effective advocate for my child.	0 (0%)	3 (20.00%)	3 (20.00%)	**7 (46.67%)**	2 (13.33%)
The school helps me understand my rights and responsibilities and my child's rights and responsibilities under federal and state education laws.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (20.00%)	**9 (60.00%)**	3 (20.00%)
There is a clear written process for resolving families' complaints or problems with the school, and I know how to use it.	0 (0%)	2 (13.33%)	2 (13.33%)	**8 (53.33%)**	3 (20.00)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process about my child's placement in school programs.	0 (0%)	1 (6.67%)	3 (20.00%)	**9 (60.00%)**	2 (13.33%)
TOTALS	0	9 (10%)	18 (20%)	**49 (54.4%)**	14 (15.55%)

NOTE: Bolded text indicates the most frequently selected response.

The results of the Parents of EL Students Survey related to parents' beliefs about the degree to which the school or teachers provide parents with educational or community resources are presented in Table 15. These results came from questions 13, 19, 22, 28, 29, and 31 on the survey. Generally speaking, parents of EL students agree that the school or teacher provides educational or community resources. The EL parents agree that they understand what is expected for their child to be successful at school. The EL families also believe that they receive information from the school about after-school programs, academic programs, and community resources.

Table 15

School or Teacher provides Educational or Community Resources (Parents of EL Students)

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I understand what is expected of my child to be successful at school.	0 (0%)	2 (13.33%)	2 (13.33%)	**6 (40.00%)**	5 (33.33%)
I receive information about after-school programs and how to apply for them.	0 (0%)	2 (13.33%)	5, (33.33%)	**6 (40.00%)**	2 (13.33%)

I frequently receive information from the school about how to access educational resources for my child or my family.	0 (0%)	2 (13.33%)	2 (13.33%)	**8 (53.33%)**	3 (20.00%)
At workshops and other information sessions, my family learns how to ask the right questions about my child's progress and placement.	0 (0%)	1 (6.67%)	4 (26.67%)	**8 (53.33%)**	2 (13.33%)
Family Leadership training is offered, either by the school or by community groups in collaboration with the school.	0 (0%)	2 (13.33%)	2 (13.33%)	**9 (60.00%)**	2 (13.33%)
The school connects my family to education and recreation resources in the community that can help their children.	0 (0%)	1 (6.67%)	2 (13.33%)	**8 (53.33%)**	4 (26.67%)
TOTALS	0	10 (11.1%)	17 (18.88%)	**45 (50%)**	18 (20%)

NOTE: Bolded text indicates the most frequently selected response.

Comparison of Responses: Teachers and Two Parent Groups

I calculated the means and standard deviations for each of the five thematic clusters, and ran an ANOVA to test for statistically significant differences between the three groups. Although descriptively it appears that the PTO parents were consistently more favorable in their responses than either of the other two groups surveyed (see Table 16), the differences were not statistically significant, with one exception. There was a statistically significant difference between the three groups in response to the questions related to their perceptions that the school or teacher provides educational or community resources to parents $F(2,33) = 3.767$, p < .05.

Table 16

Descriptive Statistics

		The Teachers Communicate with Families	The School Welcomes Families	Involvement Opportunities Reflect the Diversity of Families	Families are Empowered	School or Teacher provides Educational or Community Resources
Teachers	N	18	18	18	18	18
	Mean	3.9524	3.5185	3.5093	3.3611	3.2037
	Std. Deviation	.37637	.63629	.57301	.63465	.57325
PTO Parents	N	3	3	3	3	3
	Mean	4.1905	4.333	3.9444	4.2222	4.0556
	Std. Deviation	.70470	.60093	.94771	.69389	.82215
EL Parents	N	15	15	15	15	15
	Mean	3.9905	3.8333	3.7111	3.7556	3.7889
	Std. Deviation	.76830	.70147	.64077	.75295	.82247
Total	N	36	36	36	36	36
	Mean	3.9881	3.7176	3.6296	3.5972	3.5185
	Std. Deviation	.58092	.68755	.62756	.72306	.75884

Table 17 presents the results of the ANOVA.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
The Teachers Communicate with Families	Between Groups	.146	2	.073	.206	.815
	Within Groups	11.665	33	.353		
	Total	11.811	35			
The School Welcomes Families	Between Groups	2.052	2	1.026	2.336	.113
	Within Groups	14.494	33	.439		
	Total	16.546	35			
Involvement Opportunities Reflect the Diversity of Families	Between Groups	.658	2	.329	.827	.446
	Within Groups	13.126	33	.398		
	Total	13.784	35			
Families are Empowered	Between Groups	2.551	2	1.276	3.767	.034
	Within Groups	15.747	33	.477		
	Total	18.299	35			
School or Teacher Provides Educational Resources	Between Groups	3.746	2	1.873	3.767	.034
	Within Groups	16.409	33	.497		
	Total	20.154	35			

Focus Group / Interviews

All participants in the Parent Surveys were asked at the end of the survey if they would like to participate in a Focus Group. Of the 18 parent participants, only 2 parents from English Learner families agreed to participate. I had scheduled the Focus Group to take place on January 4, 2022 at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom. Although the two parents were scheduled to participate at the same time, the second participant arrived late, after the first participant had left the Zoom meeting. As a result, what I had originally planned as a focus group became two individual interviews. Each participant was asked the following two questions: *What communication approaches are effective at making you feel that you are a valuable part of your child's education?* And, similarly, *What communication approaches are ineffective in making you feel that you are a valuable part of your child's education?*

In response to the first question, Participant A said, "Participant A said it is difficult for the parents to get any information from the school, but Class Dojo makes it easier. I can call the school for any information. Sometimes the teacher on Class Dojo takes a while to respond." She also said that she wished there were parent classes and more parent participation. She would like to see more classes on the importance of parent involvement. Participant B said, "Teacher contacted me because my daughter was not doing well in school. I had many questions. I contacted the school and asked to meet with teacher. I had many questions. I met with the teacher, but she did not speak Spanish. There was no interpreter provided at that meeting, so my questions were not answered. Later, at Parent-Teacher conferences, we had a translator." When

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asked what would make her feel more connected at school, she said, "it seems like most teachers are trying, but maybe they don't recognize student differences, such as shyness." She stated that teachers may benefit in training on how to communicate with families. She would like to receive training on how to help her children at home.

In response to the second question, Participant A said, "There is a lack of communication between students, teachers, and parents. Like if a student needs help with their homework. There is a lack of communication from the school to parents. My child got hurt at school, and no one from the school called me. I took him to the hospital that night, but no one ever called from the school." Participant B said, "We speak Spanish in the house and there is a lack of communication with the school due to the language barrier. When I met with the teacher in conferences, teacher mentioned how shy my daughter is. She has not bonded with the teacher and that is why she is struggling. I reached out to teacher on Class Dojo because it is translated, but the teacher did not respond. I reached out to teacher because I received a notice that my daughter could be retained. My daughters are twins, and this daughter is very timid, very shy. The other twin is bolder. They have different teachers. Both girls are behind, but the bolder daughter is having a better experience. The shy twin even has had accidents because she doesn't even want to raise her hand to use the bathroom. I just want to know how to help my daughter. I wish teacher would tell me what is happening in the classroom that makes my one daughter so shy. When I called the school, the school office person said to use Class Dojo. When I do send a

message on Class Dojo, the teacher does not respond. I want to work with the teacher. I want to

help my child."

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

Much has been written about the importance of School-Family partnerships. Parents are most effectively involved when teachers actively encourage school-family partnerships (Epstein, 2001). School and family partnerships are a major component of a successful and effective school (Pansiri & Bulawa, 2014). Specifically, it is the teacher who reaches out to the family to form that partnership, to make that connection, and then, through continued communication, to strengthen that connection (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1997). Teacher attitudes toward parents are key in parents choosing to participate in their child's yet very little specific guidance has been given about how best to engage parents.

At this elementary school, like many schools, there is inconsistent communication with the families. Many teachers lament that "those parents" never "communicate back." Those teachers who are diligent in attempting to communicate with families utilize a variety of methods. While some use the old school note or phone call home, many use Class DOJO, Remind, or Class Tag, or even personally text parents. The surveys and focus group questions I used in my dissertation study were designed to measure families' and teachers' perceptions of partnership outreach. My research questions were: What communication approaches do families from low-income backgrounds find effective at making them feel they are a valuable part of their child's education? What communication approaches do families from low-income backgrounds report are ineffective at improving the School-Family partnership?

Both parent and teacher surveys included similar questions to help identify differences in perception of School-Family Partnerships. Questions asked in interviews provided personal answers, helping to further unpack the information gleaned from the surveys. Although this study was limited to one campus, the demographics of the elementary school mirror many schools serving low-income communities nationwide. The challenge of providing communication from teachers to families from low socio-economic backgrounds and thus, forming a partnership, united in the cause of the student being successful, is universal. The fact that the elementary school serves all the PK-4th grade families in a geographic area, and over 600 students, improves the relevance of the research. Although findings might not generalize more widely, they certainly have the potential to be useful for school staff.

The three groups surveyed were: teachers ($n=18$), PTO parents (involved parents recruited from PTO and School Site Council) ($n=3$), and English Learner (EL) parents ($n=15$). Overall, the responses between the three groups were similar, with the PTO parents being the most positive and the teachers being the least positive, although the differences, with one exception, were not statistically significant. Two respondents of the 15 from the EL parent group frequently marked "disagree" or "strongly disagree."

In the interviews I conducted, two EL parents were questioned. Both appeared to be very frank and elaborated on issues they and their children had at school. Both reported having struggled with communication with their child's teacher. While interviewing them, I wondered if many of my EL families had "Social Desirability Bias" when completing the survey. Over the

years in which I have worked with EL families, I have noticed that many EL parents are hesitant to complain, and often appear to be more concerned with their child's behavior than academic achievement. I wondered if the EL participants in my study were concerned about anonymity and about their child's teacher knowing their answers. By the same token, I am concerned that the PTO parents might also be displaying Social Desirability Bias and were trying to be overly positive.

Teacher participants stated in an open-ended question at the end of the survey that the school-family relationships have not been great. One teacher said that when the school was an "open campus" and parents could drop off their students at the class, teachers could speak directly at that time. Another teacher stated that the school or district has gotten worse in communicating with teachers, which results in deterioration of teacher communication. If teachers do not know what is "going on" at a school or district level, they cannot communicate information to their students' families. That teacher stated that many teachers "feel that way" and do not want to give incorrect information to their families.

Yet another teacher stated that families and staff are not aware of programs available to students and that many programs exclude younger children. This teacher stated that the school can improve the partnership between families and the school. Another teacher stated that the more parents are involved, the more success the students will have. During the closure related to COVID, there were virtual opportunities for parents to participate; such virtual opportunities should be continued.

One teacher gave a practical suggestion to improve school-family partnerships: They suggested that teachers could have something once a month for new families, perhaps on the day of the PTO meeting. Parents could be welcomed to come and "have lunch with their child, invited to sit in the classroom for an hour, maybe having a roving sub or admin take the teacher's class for half an hour so the teacher may meet with the parent, review the I-ready scores (because hopefully that gets done in the first couple of days), discuss questions and concerns." It would basically be a Parent/Teacher conference and a "day to embrace the parents into our community."

Many of the ideas expressed by the teachers could have a positive impact on school climate and improve school-family partnerships. To achieve a positive partnership, it is important that parents have *confidence* in their child's teacher, feel *welcome* at school, and experience *reciprocity* in their communication with school (Lusse et al., 2019). Communication between parent and teacher needs to be two-way and a conversation, not just about academics but about behavior and social-emotional learning (Lusse et al., 2019). If teachers can encourage two-way communication and discuss their students' social-emotional learning with parents, school-family partnerships should improve. Parental support at home is important, regardless of socioeconomic status, but parents of lower socioeconomic status or parents who are English Learners may have less confidence in advocating for their child (Lusse et al., 2019).

At the school where this study took place, 35% of students are English Learners, and it is estimated that 65%-75% of the parents are Spanish-speaking. As the number of English Learners

in U.S. schools continue to increase, the diversity of families with whom schools engage also increases (Protacio et al., 2020). Some teachers, however, may be unsure or have very little experience in engaging families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Protacio et al., 2020.). It was interesting that in this study the EL parents had a much higher participation rate than the PTO parents. That was not what I expected. I attribute this partially to the time of year that the survey was administered. It was a busy time for the PTO parents. Also, the EL parents were personally invited to participate in the survey. After the initial e-mail communication, my translator followed up with the EL families in case they had any questions. That extra follow up with a trusted member of the school community might have improved participation. I believe that that my translator's follow up phone calls with EL families resulted in better participation from those families. Because of inexperience in working with such families, teachers and administrators may misconstrue the lack of family attendance at school events as a lack of caring about their children's education. I observed that communication from a trusted member of the community improved participation. Teachers may need additional Professional Development in interacting, reaching out, or communicating with families. In fact, in most teacher preparation programs at a university level, one or two assignments (letters home, for example) are given to prepare education students for interacting with families. In California, in the Induction Program that is required for new teachers, the focus is lesson planning and classroom management and, according to an Induction Mentor, no work is done related to communication with families or interacting with parents.

Families, and specifically EL families, must not be negatively judged by whether or not they are involved in school-based activities since they are likely supporting their children's education in the home but in ways that are less visible to the school. School improvement plans and policy initiatives often mandate that educators engage families, but research has overwhelmingly documented that teachers often report feeling underprepared to do so (Edwards et al., 2019).

Traditionally, families have very little to no input on how they can be involved. The school is mostly in control. Forming school-family partnerships involves an interchange of information between educators and families. School-family partnerships involve traditional notions of having families come to school to volunteer, chaperone field trips, attend parent–teacher conferences, and participate in school events. "The focus of this interaction is schooling—the processes which surround learning" (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014, p. 404). Activities or initiatives at this point can either be at home or school, but a key point is that families are provided more agency. They also share information about the child's home life and other influences. As an example, Snell (2018) conducted a qualitative study focusing on immigrant and refugee parents' perspectives around their child's schooling. While the school expected traditional notions of involvement, these parents saw their responsibilities involving teaching their children concepts such as respect for elders or helping their children maintain their heritage language and culture.

Although my study was conducted at one rural, remote elementary school, the demographics are similar to many schools nationwide. The sample sizes are small, but the results

tell an important story. The teachers believe they have good relationships with parents and believe that they communicate well. The PTO parents, those parents traditionally identified as involved, were found to be very positive in their perceptions of the school-family partnership. The largest group of respondents in my study was the English Learner parents. EL parents make up approximately 65% of the district's parent population. For the EL parents, the majority of the population, perhaps the district needs to rethink what school-family partnerships look like.

Since the time I administered the survey, the school district has hired a Family Liaison who works in the front office to assist parents. The addition of a staff member who is part of the community, respected in the community, and bilingual has appeared to improve school-family partnerships. That liaison provides a bridge for parents to reach teachers and school leadership. That liaison helps to connect the community and families with resources and assists with teacher communication to families. This is a promising step, but the long-term impact remains to be studied.

Parents are the first educators of their children, and it is parents who know their children the best. In order to connect parents with their child's school, teachers and the school need to communicate and need to assess the needs of the parents and meet them where they are.

APPENDIX 1

TEACHER SURVEY

Directions:

This questionnaire asks about your perceptions of your school and the extent to which you and

the school are engaged with families. Please choose one of the choices for each statement that

best represents your feelings. Please attempt to answer all questions on the questionnaire.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I have good relationships with my students' families.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I see my colleagues consistently interact with families in a positive manner.	1	2	3	4	5
3. The school provides flexible volunteer opportunities for families (e.g., during, before, and after school hours; various types of tasks).	1	2	3	4	5
4. The school's policies and programs reflect, respect, and value the diversity of the families in the community.	1	2	3	4	5

5. The school removes economic or other obstacles for family participation at school events (e.g., by providing transportation, child activities for siblings, meals).

1   2   3   4   5

6. At my school, a family liaison helps teachers connect to families and bridge barriers of language and culture.

1   2   3   4   5

7. I communicate with families in multiple ways, including calls, texts, or emails.

1   2   3   4   5

8. The school does an annual survey of families to get their ideas about programs, policies, issues, or concerns.

1   2   3   4   5

9. It is easy for families to meet with the principal, teachers, or counselors.

1   2   3   4   5

10. Families are encouraged to bring up issues or concerns.

1   2   3   4   5

11. I provide information or guidance to families about how they can support their children's learning at home.

1   2   3   4   5

12. I frequently communicate with families about what their child is learning in my classroom.

1   2   3   4   5

13. Programs and activities for families focus on student achievement by helping families

1   2   3   4   5

understand what their children are
learning.

14. I share student work with families.	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
15. Student achievement data are shared with families in ways that solicit their ideas about how to improve achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
16. The school reports to parents about student and school progress.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I frequently invite family members to volunteer in my classroom or at the school.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I share with family members how to help their child with homework or practice academic skills at home.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Families get information about academic and after-school programs for students and how to apply for them.	1	2	3	4	5
20. The school helps families learn how the school system works and how to be an effective advocate for their child.	1	2	3	4	5
21. The school provides information to families about their rights and responsibilities	1	2	3	4	5

under federal and state education
laws.

22. I frequently send families information about educational resources available to them.	1	2	3	4	5
23. There is a clear written process for resolving families' complaints or problems with the school, and families know how to use it.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Families and staff have opportunities to learn together how to collaborate to improve student achievement.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
25. The school has a process in place to welcome and orient new and incoming students and families.	1	2	3	4	5
26. Families are part of the decision-making process about student placement in school programs.	1	2	3	4	5
27. The school's racial and cultural diversity is recognized and openly discussed in a constructive way that includes	1	2	3	4	5

staff and families (e.g., at family group and faculty meetings, school council meetings, and discussion groups).

28. At workshops and other information sessions, parents learn how to ask the right questions about their children's progress and placement.	1	2	3	4	5
29. Family Leadership training is offered, either by the school or by community groups in collaboration with the school.	1	2	3	4	5
30. School committees (such as PTO) actively recruit families from various backgrounds that reflect the diversity of the school community.	1	2	3	4	5
31. Counselors or teachers refer families to education and recreation programs in the community that can help their children.	1	2	3	4	5

Feel free to share any thoughts you have about school-family partnerships:

Parent Survey

Directions:
This questionnaire asks about your perceptions of your child's or children's school and staff and the extent to which the school engages you. Please choose one of the choices for each statement that best represents your feelings. Please attempt to answer all questions on the questionnaire. If you have multiple children at the school, try to think of your general interactions for both/all of your children across both/all teachers.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I have a good relationship with my child's teacher(s).	1	2	3	4	5
2. I feel welcome at the school.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I am invited by my child's teacher(s) to volunteer in their classroom or at the school.	1	2	3	4	5
4. The school provides multiple volunteer opportunities that fit my schedule and interests (e.g., during, before, or after school hours; various types of tasks).	1	2	3	4	5
5. School staff respect and value the diversity of the families in the school.	1	2	3	4	5

6. The school makes it easier for my family to attend school activities by providing transportation, activities for siblings, meals, etc.

1	2	3	4	5

7. The school ensures that I have access to the information shared at school events and activities (e.g., providing explanation or translation as needed).

1	2	3	4	5

8. The school communicates with me in multiple ways (e.g., calls, texts, notes, letters, or emails).

1	2	3	4	5

9. The school asks my opinion about issues and concerns.

1	2	3	4	5

10. It is easy for parents to bring up issues or concerns with the principal, teachers, or counselors.

1	2	3	4	5

11. I receive help or information from my child's teacher(s) about how I can support my child's learning at home.

1	2	3	4	5

12. The school keeps me well informed and gives me opportunity to ask about my child's progress.

1	2	3	4	5

13. I understand what is expected of my child to be successful at school.

1	2	3	4	5

14. The school shares and explains my child's performance on state assessments.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
15. The school explains how state assessments results are used to help my child learn.	1	2	3	4	5
16. The school shares information about overall school progress and how my family can support improvements.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I frequently check the schoolwork my child brings home.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I have received training and support from the school and my child's teachers on how to review and discuss my child's homework.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I receive information about after-school programs and how to apply for them.	1	2	3	4	5
20. The school provides training and information about how the school system works and how to be an effective advocate for my child.	1	2	3	4	5
21. The school helps me understand my rights and	1	2	3	4	5

responsibilities and my child's rights and responsibilities under federal and state educational laws.

22. I frequently receive information from the school about how to access educational resources for my child or my family.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I know the school's process for resolving complaints or problems.	1	2	3	4	5
24. My family has received information on how to help improve overall school progress.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
25. I have the opportunity to participate in advisory or advocacy groups (e.g., PTA, accountability committees) to promote student success.	1	2	3	4	5
26. I have the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process about my child's placement in school programs.	1	2	3	4	5
27. The school's racial and cultural diversity is recognized and openly	1	2	3	4	5

discussed in a constructive way that includes staff and families (e.g., at family group meetings, school council meetings, and discussion groups).

| 28. At workshops and other information sessions, my family learns how to ask the right questions about my child's progress and placement. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| 29. I have the opportunity to learn about family leadership through trainings offered by the school or by community groups in collaboration with the school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| 30. School committees (such as PTO) actively recruit families from various backgrounds that reflect the diversity of the school community. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| 31. The school connects my family to education and recreation resources in the community that can help my child. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Feel free to share any thoughts you have about school-family partnerships:

Please provide your e-mail address if you would like to participate in a Focus Group:

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