RECOMMENDATIONS VERSUS REALITY: FACTORS RELATED TO PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES WITHIN SCHOOL-PARENT COMPACTS IN A LOW-INCOME COMMUNITY

By

D'Andrea Leucia Jacobs

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ABSTRACT

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Research over several decades has clearly demonstrated the benefits of parental

engagement in their children's education and development. As a result, schools are increasingly

making efforts to support "home-school partnerships." The federal government requires school

districts that receive Title 1 funding to create school-parent compacts. These compacts describe

the manner in which parents and schools will work together to establish such partnerships. The

purpose of this study is to examine parents' views of engagement and their motivation to engage

in practices within the compacts. Using a mixed methods design, the study examined parent

perceptions and behaviors related to practices that are described within school-parent compacts

in Title 1 schools in a low-income community. School-parent compacts and parent definitions of

parental engagement were examined for content and overlap.

While the compacts emphasized school-based practices such as home-school

communication and learning at home (i.e., homework participation), parent reports of compact

practices revealed higher levels of participation amongst practices within the Learning at Home

and Parenting categories. Parent definitions of engagement also emphasized home-based

practices such as Parenting and Learning at Home, although they varied more than the practices

described in the compact. Parents were surveyed using measures that test Hoover-Dempsey &

Sandler's (2005) model of the Parental Involvement Process to examine sources of motivation

that are related to parent reports of involvement practices as defined in the school-parent

compact. Specific invitations for involvement were found to explain an additional 11% of the variance, after controlling for demographic variables and motivational beliefs, $R^2$ change = .11, F change $(3, 121) = 8.08$, $p < .05$, Cohen's $f^2 = .18$. Life context variables explained an additional 4% of the variance, after controlling the aforementioned variables, $R^2$ change= .04, F change $(2, 119) = 4.57$, $p < .05$, Cohen's $f^2 = .08$. Parent reports of specific invitations from their child's teacher and perceptions of time and energy were uniquely significant contributors to the model. Finally, this study examined parents' lived experiences with parental engagement and schooling using phenomenological methods. Across levels of engagement, parents reported active participation in school-based organizations and extra-curricular activities, as well as disinterest in school that was often attributed to perceived teacher apathy. When asked about their parents' practices, they were related to parenting style, structure in the home, and learning opportunities within the home. Parent employment was perceived as a barrier to engagement, despite acknowledgement of the value of home-based practices that were revealed in the interviews. Interview participants highlighted the importance of varied forms of parent-teacher communication when speaking of their own engagement that supported home-school partnerships, although it was not always bi-directional. The results highlights the lack of alignment between school-parent compact and parent perceptions of engagement, as well as factors that may contribute to participation practices that are identified by the school.

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Ozzie and Rosevelt Jacobs.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thelamour and Jerome Moulden for their understanding and continued friendship throughout the years.

Last, and most certainly not least, I would like to thank my family for supporting me throughout my graduate career. Their prayers and optimistic words during times of frustration and struggle helped me tremendously, even when they did not realize it. My brother and sister, Rashad and Ozzie, kept me grounded and focused on "the finish line" throughout my graduate experience. In addition, my parents' confidence in my abilities encouraged me to continue moving forward, and I am excited about the opportunity to share this accomplishment with them.

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# KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

Role Activity Beliefs Scale = RAB

Valence Toward School Scale = VAS

Parental Self-Efficacy for Helping the Child Succeed in School Scale = PSE

Parents' Perceptions of Specific Invitations for Involvement from the Teacher Scale = PST

Parents' Perceptions of Specific Invitations for Involvement from the Child Scale = PSC

Parents' Perceptions of Personal Knowledge and Skills Scale = PPK

Parents' Perceptions of Personal Time and Energy Scale = PPT

Parental Engagement Practices Scale = PEP

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Research suggests that parental engagement practices are correlated with a

number of positive child outcomes, such as increased academic performance, student

motivation, and social competence (e.g., Cox, 2005; Epstein, 1995; Fan & Chen, 2001;

Henderson & Berla, 1994; Jeynes, 2005). Although the definition of practices that

embody parental engagement remains an area of debate, studies of parental engagement

practices within home and school settings consistently yield positive relationships

between involvement and academic and behavioral outcomes (e.g., Crosnoe, 2009; Esler,

Godber, & Christenson 2008; Finn, 1998; Jeynes, 2005; Jeynes, 2010).

Given the positive implications of these practices, schools are increasingly

making efforts to support "home-school partnerships" (Baker, 1997; Christenson, 2003;

Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Lindsay & Docknell, 2004). Such

partnerships allow for encouraging messages regarding the value of schooling and

prosocial behavior to be echoed within multiple environments, strengthening their

influence. Within such partnerships, parents and school staff work together to foster

similar goals, behavioral norms, and expectations for children. From teachers to

administrators, staff members within school districts utilize a variety of efforts to increase

these partnerships (Christenson & Christenson, 1998; Desimone, Finn-Stevenson, &

Henrich, 2000; Smith, Wohlsetter, Kuzin, & De Pedro, 2011). Such approaches include

school-to-home communication practices (e.g., newsletters that inform parents of

upcoming school events), academic interventions with a home-based component, as well

as psychoeducational programs which provide training on parenting strategies that

promote problem solving skills while fostering an environment that supports academic learning (Epstein, 1995; Hill & Tyson, 2009).

Although school districts use a number of methods to support parental engagement, not all strategies meet with success (Cooper, 2010; Kim, 2009). Research in the area of parental involvement in education suggests a number of potential barriers to the prescribed forms of involvement. Parents' beliefs about the appropriate role in their child's schooling are shaped by their perceptions of contextual factors (e.g., perceived lack of time or access to certain activities, limited skills set or knowledge base to contribute or assist their child) and perceptions of the invitations they receive that are meant to encourage their involvement (Bandura, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997; 2005; Kim, 2009). Each of these perceptions may impede their involvement within the home and school arenas. Alternatively, some parents may possess unconventional views of how they should engage in their child's education (Schnee & Bose, 2010; Smith, 2006; Weiss, Mayer, Kreider, Vaughan, Dearing, Hencke, & Pinto, 2003). These cognitions may in turn influence the amount and form of behaviors, or practices, that parents ultimately choose to engage in (Bandura, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997; 2005).

Research on parental engagement also highlights cognitions and behaviors related to engagement within low-income communities, with the ultimate goal of identifying ways to improve child outcomes within this population of students and families (Coley & Morris, 2002; Conley & Albright, 2004; Cutler, 2000; Cooper, 2010; Crosnoe, 2009; Domina, 2005; Weiss et al., 2003). Many studies, however, place particular emphasis on factors that may discourage or limit parental involvement (e.g., Cooper, 2010; Kim,

2009; McIntyre, Fiese, Eckert, Digennaro, & Wildenger, 2007).  For example, parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may find it difficult to actively participate in their child's education due to their previous interactions and perceptions related to school settings.  These prior experiences can negatively influence their views of schools in relation to their child's development, which may discourage participation (Lareau, 1987; Lareau, 2000; Ogbu, 1979). Parents from lower socioeconomic classes may view schools as entities that "fix" their children, providing a safe haven for their children to learn appropriate academic and behavioral expectations that can prepare them to be productive members of society. At the same time, these parents may view their ability to assist in their child's academic performance and behavioral development as minimal (and, in some cases, unhelpful), leading to decreased interest and participation in activities that require contact with their child's school (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Jones & Prinz, 2005; Schnee, & Bose, 2010). As a result of these varied experiences and connotations associated with schools, some parents may hold perceptions regarding parental engagement practices that differ from those commonly held by school staff, although these perceptions may not be explicitly communicated to school staff. Rather, this may be expressed through their limited engagement in practices promoted by the school as appropriate engagement practices (Cutler, 2000; Schnee & Bose, 2010; Smith, 2006).

Despite studies indicating that parents from low-income households have limited engagement in schools, some researchers argue that these findings reflect a narrow perspective on what constitutes "parental engagement," rather than an inability or disinterest in parent participation (Bakker & Denesson, 2007; Smith et al., 2011; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, & Hernandez, 2003).  With an emphasis on acquiring middle

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class values and practices regarding parental engagement, parents from low-income communities are often viewed from a deficit perspective (Bratlinger, 2003; Hampton, Mumford, & Bond, 1998; Lightfoot, 2004). As a result, parents who reside within low-income environments are more likely to be perceived as "uninvolved" or "disengaged" within studies that adhere to a rigid definition of parental engagement, as they are less likely to engage in the practices that are promoted and performed by parents from middle-class communities (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006; Griffith, 1998).

While many quantitative studies reflect this perspective, qualitative and mixed methods studies suggest that parents within low-income communities may engage in different, yet nonetheless beneficial, involvement practices (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006; Ceballo, 2004; DeMoss & Vaughn, 2000; Gillandes & Jimenéz, 2004; Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001). These practices are often primarily within the home or greater community and are not visible by school staff and administrators. While these practices may not be directly associated with the school setting, these practices have a significant effect on academic measures of achievement, particularly within urban areas (Jeynes, 2005; Jeynes, 2010). As such, teachers, school administrators, and school staff may not observe parents as they engage in these practices. This may ultimately lead to the perception that parents from low-income environments are "hard to reach," despite efforts to encourage parents to become involved (Demoss & Vaughn, 2000; Kim, 2009; Mapp & Hong, 2010).

Armed with knowledge of these issues, research literature in the area of school-based programming tends to advocate a nuanced approach to programming efforts to encourage parental engagement. As opposed to using a "one size fits all" approach,

researchers advocate school-directed programming that encourages a range of activities, such as parent newsletters, parent liaisons, increased roles of parents as decision makers within the school, resource centers, and workshops as programmatic efforts to increase the amount and quality of parental engagement.  These efforts encourage and incentivize varied forms of engagement practices within the home and school settings, acknowledging that parents may effectively support their children in both settings (Brough & Irvin, 2001 from Carter, 2002; Quigley, 2000; Simmons, Stevenson, & Strnad, 1993).

Federal policies advocate for the implementation of a Parental Involvement Plan for schools, imposing documented expectations of the desired efforts for all parties. As a requirement of schools that receive federal funding through Title I of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, schools are required to create *school-parent compacts.* The school-parent compact serves as a written agreement between parents and teachers (and, as an option, students) that clearly outlines the school's vision for an effective partnership, listing responsibilities for all parties as they work together support a child's education. The content of the parent responsibilities is used to articulate the vision of parental engagement within that school system, and often describes practices that can be quantified or measured (Nakagawa, 2000). Although parents are not required to sign the compacts in every state, schools are required to distribute the compact to the parents of children who attend the school district.

Although the underlying purpose of the compact is to promote a collaborative approach to education that involves parents, students, and school staff, the role and function of school-parent compacts may not serve its intended purpose (Henderson,

Carson, Avallone, & Whipple, 2011; Nakagawa, 2000; Stevenson & Laster, 2008). In a

critical examination of the discourse that is embedded within school-parent compacts,

Nakagawa (2000) points out a number of problems with its current use. For example,

Nakagawa (2000) notes that the structure of school-parent compact suggests that the

families of the school share the same assumptions regarding the parental engagement and

home-school partnerships. Nakagawa (2000) also notes that since schools are responsible

for disseminating the compact to parents, the school-parent compact ultimately shifts

from a collaborative agreement to one that is created by the school and given to the

parents without equal input from both parties. Despite the potential voluntary nature of

the agreement, Nakagawa (2000) argues that "the language and form of the compact

become[s] part of a...discourse that too easily creates an expectation of good schooling as

an obligation need only be met if parents are correctly involved" (p. 465). Such an

argument is particularly significant in reference to parents and families from low-income

communities, given the literature base that consistently characterizes them as parents who

support their child's education in ways that may not be highlighted within school settings

(Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006; Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman, 2007).

**Problem Statement**

The purpose of this study was to examine factors related to parental engagement

as described within school-parent compacts in low-income communities. This study used

an explanatory sequential mixed methods design; qualitative methods were used to

further explain the results of the quantitative data in this study. The first phase of the

study was a qualitative exploration of conceptualizations of parental engagement by

examining school-parent compacts and parent definitions of parental engagement within

two school districts in a low-income community. Using the practices revealed in the analyses of the school-parent compacts, findings from the initial qualitative phase were used to create a measure that examined parent participation in the practices described within the school-parent compacts. In the second phase of the study, quantitative measures were used to test the Model of the Parental Involvement Process (as theorized by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 2005) in order to assess the sources of motivation that are related to their engagement in practices described in the school-parent compacts,. In the third phase of the study, qualitative interviews were used to further expand upon factors related to parental engagement decisions by exploring parent perceptions and experiences with regard to home-school partnerships.

Specifically, the following research questions were explored:

1. How is parental engagement defined in school-parent compacts at the district level?

2. In what ways are parents engaged in practices defined within school-parent compacts?

    a. Which specific practices described within the school-parent compact do parents report engaging in the most?

    b. Which practices described within the school-parent compact do parents report the lowest levels of engagement?

3. How do parents define their engagement?

    a. How similar are parent definitions of their parental engagement practices in relation to practices defined in school-parent compacts?

4. How are parent sources of motivation towards parental engagement related to parent reports of practices described within the school-parent compact?

   a. How are parent reports of motivational beliefs related to parent reports of practices described within the school-parent compact?

   b. How are parent reports of invitations to involvement related to parent reports of practices described within the school-parent compact?

   c. How are parent reports of life context variables related to parent reports of practices described within the school-parent compact?

5. In what ways do parents' lived experiences with parental engagement in education explain reported behaviors described in the school-parent compact?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

**The Development of Home-School Partnerships**

During the early stages of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the role of the parent became increasingly

structured in a manner that promoted a formal relationship between schools and families

(Cutler, 2000). With organizations such as the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), schools

were able to encourage parents to become involved in a regulated way, while limiting the

degree to which parents could truly affect change within their child's school system.

While this led to increased cooperation with parents and teachers, it also changed the

fashion in which parents made their voices heard in "acceptable" ways (Cutler, 2000).

Along with the changing interactions between schools and families, federal

policies began to recognize the important role that families played in school success

towards the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. As early as 1965, legislation in the form of the Early and

Secondary Education Act (ESEA), called for increased family involvement practices

within schools. In 1994, the Goals 2000: Educate America Act continued the call for

schools to promote parental involvement in schools in order to achieve a number of

academic markers and social goals by the year 2000. Additional forms of legislation (e.g.,

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001) included provisions that required schools to use

portions of their funding to incorporate family involvement programs within their schools

and communities. Such efforts resonate within a growing literature base that stresses the

importance of active parent participation in all aspects of education (Anderson & Minke,

2007; Christenson, 2003).

As the push for increased parental participation occurred within the literature, parents were considered to be integral in the process of school preparation during the early infancy stage of development (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991). Continued research in this area established a positive relationship between parental contact with school and academic outcomes, such as grades and behavioral expectations (Christenson, 2003). Amid knowledge of this connection, schools adopted what was coined the "school-to-home transmission model," in which schools attempted to inform parents of school-based activities while providing practical suggestions regarding the manner in which they can aid in their child's academic achievement (Epstein, 1995). To further establish a school culture that encouraged parental participation, the terminology used within parent involvement research and educational policy shifted yet again from the school-to-home transmission model to a "partnership" or "collaboration" model within the education system. These descriptive, action-based terms refer to the type of interactions that must take place within the home and school settings in order to effectively promote parental involvement (Swap, 1992; Christenson, 2003).

**An Ecological Understanding of Parental Engagement**

Ecological systems theory proposes a multilevel and bidirectional influence between parental engagement and a student's academic environment (Broffenbrenner, 1992). As a general framework, ecological systems theory provides an explanation of why home and school environments, educational policy, and other factors beyond the school setting may influence parental engagement in education. The theory's emphasis on the relationship between environmental and societal constructs highlights a need to examine the factors within and outside of a child's immediate environment that may

shape a parent's willingness or ability to engage in their child's education in varied and substantial ways.

According to this framework, students are nested within various settings and interactions that influence their academic experience. These settings and interactions occur within varied forms of systems, which may be distal or proximal experiences that can change over the course of time. The environments in which children reside (referred to as *microsystems*) interact and influence children's ability to perform in school. This could include the home and school environments, with which they physically interact and directly affects them. The manner in which the microsystems interact creates a *mesosystem* that can affect a child's developmental outcomes such as motivation and learning (Bowen and Bowen, 1998; Broffenbrenner, 1992; Christenson, 2003). As a child interacts with individuals within these environments, the child's general interest in school and perceptions regarding academic ability begin to develop (Ames & Ames, 1989; Bowen, & Bowen, 1998).

Parents, in turn, are also affected by the mesosystems created by the school, home, and interacting community, as the interactions which take place in these mesosystems may shape a parent's willingness to participate in their child's education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). The *exosystem* consists of aspects of the environment that indirectly affect the child, such as the parent's workplace and the teacher education programs that train the teachers in the area. The effects of these environments resonate within the child's educational experience, as they ultimately affect the quality of instruction and parent-child interactions that take place within their lives. The *macrosystem* consists of the context in which all of the aforementioned systems

reside. Federal and local educational policy are important aspects of the macrosystem, as they impose a structure that informs the manner in which parents, schools, and students will be required to interact with each other. The *chronosystem* refers to the role of time and development as they interact with these systems. A child's age, or the time period in which a parent loses his/her job, for example, affects the degree to which these systems will interact with each other, as well as the manner in which a child will ultimately respond to interactions that take place within the school settings.

**Conceptualizations of Parental Engagement**

**Defining "parent."** Throughout the discussion on parental engagement, it is important to note that the term "parent" will be used broadly within this study. Given the wide range of potential caregivers and guardians, a strict definition of the term would not be appropriate (Downer & Myers, 2010; NCLB). Since a caregiver is not always a biological parent, "parent" will refer to individuals who assume responsibility for the well being of a given child. This could include a biological mother or father, but could also include a range of other descriptors (e.g., grandparent, sibling, aunt/uncle, foster parent, etc.).

**General definitions of parental involvement and parental engagement.** Research in the area of parental involvement suggests that there is no consensus as to what defines the practice (Baker & Soden, 1998, 1997; Christenson, 2003; Lawson, 2003). One of the proposed definitions defines the actions as "the means in which parents support their child's academic and behavioral success" (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006). These approaches, which can consist of parenting activities, behaviors, relational styles, or projected messages toward education, can occur within or outside of the immediate

school environment. This general definition, however, embodies varied methods and practices.

While many studies continue to utilize "parental involvement" as a term to describe specific ways in which parents may participate in their child's education, some researchers advocate the use a broader use of the term "parental engagement" (e.g., Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Christenson, 2003; Kim, 2009; Okagaki & Bingham, 2010; Weiss & Lopez, 2009). These researchers argue that while *involvement* speaks solely to practices or behaviors, *engagement* refers to contextual factors that influence a parent's decision to participate in such practices. As noted by Barton, Drake, Perez, Louis, and George (2004), the more progressive term "parental engagement" not only refers to the parent participation practices, but also includes "…parents' orientations to the world and how those orientations frame the things they do." Given the desire to contribute to the broader conceptualization of ways in which parents participate in their child's education, the term "parental engagement" will be used throughout this paper. It should be noted, however, that the term "parental involvement" is used in many of the applied theories within this area of research, as well as research literature in this area.

**Epstein's six types of parental involvement.** One of the prevailing explanations of parental involvement in education stems from the work of Joyce Epstein (Epstein, 1987; Epstein, 1995; Epstein et al., 2002 from Epstein & Sanders, 2006). Epstein identifies six types of involvement in which parents can support their child's education, as well as the means by which schools can promote these practices. Each of the types differs in regards to the means and degree of interaction with the educational institution (parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and

collaborating with the community). All of the typologies can be operationalized in a variety of ways, with a wide range of practices that could embody each type. Schools can support each form of involvement in a number of ways, although challenges may occur when schools attempt to assist parents in these formats. As such, Epstein and colleagues (2002) generated *redefinitions* of the commonly referenced aspects of these typologies, which were put in place by the authors to describe alternative ways to that schools can approach parental involvement in these arenas (see Appendix A).

The first type, *parenting*, consists of a parent's ability to provide access to essential items that are necessary for children to survive (in school and beyond). This includes food, shelter, clothing, as well as an environment that is conducive to homework completion. *Communication* consists of the receipt of information provided by the school regarding their child's academic progress, along with upcoming events that are sponsored by the school (e.g., parent conferences, open houses, newsletters). This also includes efforts made on behalf of the parent to contact school staff. *Volunteering* involves the parent's direct involvement within the school via unpaid services (e.g., helping the teacher in the classroom). *Learning at home* would involve the parent's efforts to engage the child in academic-related skill development within the home, such as the development of social skills, academic content, and enrichment activities (e.g., helping a child with their homework). *Decision-making* would consist of parental involvement in the development of school policy in relation to student learning. Finally, *collaborating with the community* would consist of efforts to work with other parents (or other resources) in the community in an attempt to further understand how to effectively interact with the school, their child, and improve their home.

Despite these wide-ranging typologies, the manner in which parental engagement is ultimately examined is as varied as the definition itself. While some studies incorporate practices that occur within the home and school, some research continues to focus on direct, school-based approaches to parental engagement (Baker, 1997; Bakker & Denessen, 2007; Barnard, 2004; Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007; Domina, 2005; Hagedorn, O'Donnell, Smith, & Mulligan, 2008; Overstreet, Devine, Bevans, & Efreom, 2005; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbysch, & Darling, 1992; Stewart, 2007). For example, in a study of parenting practices in relation to achievement, Steinberg and colleagues (1992) operationalized "parental involvement in schooling" using five practices: (a) helping with homework when asked, (b) attending school programs, (c) watching the student in sports or other extracurricular activities, (d) helping the student select courses, and (e) knowing how the student is doing in school. Similar definitions were used in a qualitative study of parent perceptions of "parental involvement" (Baker, 1997). Using sixteen focus groups with a total of 111 parents, Baker (1997) found that parents referred to "parental involvement" in very specific ways that required a parent's physical presence within the school. Such practices included volunteering in the school, assisting in the office, joining a Parent Teacher Association, parent-teacher communication, and attending school-sponsored events for parents.

While some studies continue to examine parental engagement practices with a focus on the school, there are other studies that use a more inclusive definition. Using a broader definition of parental engagement practices, some studies examine the concept using home and school-based practices (Barnard, 2004; Desimone, 1999; Feuerstein, 2000; Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2007; Hong & Ho, 2005; Park, 2008;

Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2007; Shumow & Miller, 2001). Other studies specifically utilize Epstein's typologies to study parental engagement practices (DeMoss & Vaughn, 2000; Huntsinger & Jose, 2009; Ingram, Wolfe, & Leiberman, 2007; McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, & Sekino, 2004). The diverse means of measurement within these studies further complicate the ability to understand parental involvement, as the varied definitions may be confounded by studies that focus on singular aspects of the concept. As a result, the perception of the degree to which parents are involved may be perceived in a narrow to wide-ranging fashion, depending on the manner in which parent involvement is defined (by parents, teachers, or an academic institution).

**Outcomes Related to Parental Engagement**

**Student outcomes.** Research suggests a relationship between parental engagement in education and a variety of student outcomes. Specifically, this section will review the relationship between parental engagement and academic outcomes, student beliefs and identity, and the effectiveness of academic interventions.

*Academic outcomes.* Research regarding parental engagement suggests a relationship between increased levels of engagement and positive academic outcomes (Cox, 2005; Englund, Luckner, Whaley, Egeland, 2004; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hong & Ho, 2005; Garg, Melanson, & Levin, 2007; Jeynes, 2005; Stewart, 2008). Common measures of academic achievement, such as cumulative grade point average and performance on standardized tests, have a significant relationship with parental engagement across race and socioeconomic status  (Jeynes, 2005; Johnson, 2007; Lohman, Kaura, & Newman,

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2007; Tillman, 2007). These studies, however, focused primarily on the effects of school-based parental involvement, or a broad definition of involvement.

Additional research studies investigated the positive effect of home-based practices in relation to academic achievement. Home-based practices (which are not directly affiliated with the child's school) are related to child attentiveness, receptive vocabulary skills, decreased behavior problems, reading ability, and interest in future reading (Baker, Scher, & Mackler, 1997; Fantuzzo et al., 2004; Fishel & Ramirez, 2005; Shumow & Miller, 2001). For example, Fishel and Ramirez (2005) reviewed 24 studies of parental involvement interventions with a home-based component that was geared toward improving academic learning or behaviors. The authors found that practices within the home (i.e., parent tutoring) contributed to increased academic performance for elementary school children, particularly in the areas of reading and mathematics. Similarly, when parents were engaged in shared storybook reading within the home, Baker, Scher & Mackler (1997) found that children were more likely to have positive attitudes toward reading in later years, and were more inclined to read recreationally.

Explicit studies on specific aspects of parental engagement highlight the need to expand beyond more traditional definitions of parental engagement in relation to academic achievement. In a meta-analysis of 41 studies, Jeynes (2005) found a relationship between parental involvement in schools and academic achievement in urban elementary schools. General measures of parental engagement were associated with a moderate effect size of .74 for measures of academic achievement (i.e., grades, standardized test scores). When specific practices were examined, however, the results revealed more complex patterns. While some of the more commonly discussed practices

did not yield statistically significant effect sizes (i.e., checking homework, reading with children, attendance at school functions), parental expectations of academic success and parental style were found to have the greatest effect sizes related to academic achievement. This is in contrast to previous studies, which argued that school-based practices were related to positive academic outcomes (Grolnick & Slowiaczek 1994; Reynolds, 1992; Shumow & Miller, 2001). While the significant practices within the Jeynes (2005) study are not directly related to the school, these practices nonetheless were associated with academic achievement. Referred to as the "subtle aspects of parental involvement," Jeynes (2005) argues that these practices create an environment that supports positive academic outcomes.

*Student beliefs and identity.* Student perceptions of their ability affect academic outcomes, giving rise to their feelings of competence in classroom settings. Academic self-schemas (perceptions of individual ability) may be influenced by parent-child interactions, which may lead to a perceived ability to perform in academic settings. These self-schemas are related to the development of possible selves (perceptions of one's ability to perform related tasks in the future), which are related to effective performance on future tasks (Cross & Markus, 1994).

*Effectiveness of interventions.* Interventions that incorporate parental engagement as a core component improve child outcomes in a number of ways (Cox, 2005; Doescher and Sugawara, 1992; Heller & Fantuzzo, 1993; Fishel & Ramirez, 2005; Spoth, Redmond, & Shinn, 2001; Spoth, Redmons, & Lepper, 1999; Spoth, Randall, Redmond, & Lepper, 2005). For example, in an evaluation of two six-week behavioral programs that occurred separately within the home or school settings, Doescher and

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Sugawara (1992) found that both programs were effective in increasing prosocial behaviors immediately after the intervention. The fact that neither intervention alone could effectively increase prosocial behavior in the long term suggests the need to utilize interventions that work embed collaboration with the home and school settings in order to encourage cooperative behavior across multiple settings via continuous modeling and encouragement (Doescher & Sugawara, 1992). Heller and Fantuzzo (1993) found similar results with reciprocal peer tutoring. Specifically, programs that implemented reciprocal peer tutoring in math classes with an additional home-based component were found to correlate with higher test scores and higher levels of confidence in their abilities.

The benefits of interventions that incorporate parental engagement extend to interventions with a focus on home-based practices that are not related to academic support. For example, there are several programs that focus on developing positive parent-child relationships in the home (Kratachwill, McDonald, Levin, Bear-Tibbetts, & Demeray, 2004; Kumpfer, DeMarsh, & Child, 1989; Reid & Webster-Stratton, 2001; Sanders, 1999). Parent training programs, such as the Incredible Years, Strengthening Families Program (SFP), Families and Schools Together (FAST), and Triple P: Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) focus on working with parents to further develop parent-child relationships in order to improve a number of child outcomes. These outcomes include social competence skills, academic engagement, and decreased externalizing behaviors (Kratochwill, McDonald, Levin, Scalia, Coover, 2009; Sanders, Markie-Dadds, Tully, & Bor, 2000; Spoth, Redmond, & Shinn, 2001; Webster-Stratton, Reid, & Hammond, 2001).

One of the aforementioned programs, the Strengthening Families Program (SFP), utilizes concurrent parent and child sessions for parents and children to learn new skills in the areas of parenting and life skills (Kumpfer, DeMarsh, & Child, 1989). Compared to the control and alternate prevention program, initial reports of substance use (i.e., alcohol and binge drinking, marijuana use, cigarettes, and illicit drugs) were significantly delayed (Spoth, Randall, Trudeau, Shin, & Redmond, 2008) upon completion of the program. Further analyses of the program revealed that youth involved in SFP program had higher measures of academic achievement in their senior year, and reported higher levels of school engagement than other groups (Spoth, et al., 2008; Spoth, Randall, Redmond, & Lepper, 2005; Spoth, Redmond, & Lepper, 1999; Spoth, Redmond, Shin, & Azevedo, 2004; Spoth, Redmond, & Shinn, 2001). Such programs promote engagement strategies within the home that are related to positive outcomes within and outside of school settings, from prosocial behaviors to increased interest in school.

**Parent-teacher relationships.** Parental engagement can enhance or inhibit the relationship between parents and teachers (Adams and Christenson, 2000; Desimone, Finn-Stevenson, & Henrich, 2000; Kim, 2009; Wanat, 2010). For example, an increase in parental engagement may serve as an aid to the development of higher levels of parent-teacher trust across grade levels (Adams and Christenson, 2000). The promotion of trust may depend not only on the amount of engagement, but also on the perceived quality of interactions and types of engagement shared by parents and teachers. In a study by Adams and Christenson (2000), parent perceptions of their interactions with teachers were greater predictors of trust than reports of the amount of time parents spent at school. Similarly, a qualitative examination of parents from a predominately white, but

socioeconomically diverse community in the United States revealed that parents who were satisfied with their child's teacher (with minimal to no complaints about the teacher's performance) were more likely to be engaged in practices within the school. However, parents who were not satisfied with their child's teacher and school were more likely to engage in practices outside the school setting, and were less likely to participate in school-based activities. Such findings highlight the value of acquiring parents' perspectives on the relationship with their child's teacher in relation to parental engagement, as parents may be more or less inclined to participate in school-based activities based on their relationship with their child's teacher.

Additionally, school-based efforts to communicate with parents may affect perceptions of the parent-teacher relationship. Increased parent-teacher communication appears to enhance parent-teacher relationship, which may ultimately influence parent engagement practices (Christenson, 2003; McGrath, 2007). In a study by McGrath (2007), the role of mother-teacher interactions within a preschool setting was examined in an effort to explore dynamics of power and home-school partnerships. When teachers reported incidents of academic or behavioral problems to parents, this led to parent reports of discomfort (caused by the perception that the child's behavior is a reflection on their parenting skills). These feelings impeded the relationship between the mother and teacher. At the same time, there were some parents who were primarily interested in their child's well-being and satisfaction. As a result, the relationship with the teacher was of secondary importance to these mothers. These parents may not value parent-teacher trust as an integral factor to their satisfaction with school, but may value child-based outcomes as a means of determining their satisfaction with their child's school.

**Factors that Contribute to Parental Engagement**

   **The role of race.** Studies on the effects of race in studies of engagement suggest that its general benefits are present across racial groups (Desimone, 1999; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill, Castellino, Lansord, Nowlin, Dodge, Bates, & Petit, 2004; Seyfried & Chung, 2002; Hill & Tyson, 2009).  For example, a study conducted by Hill et al. (2004) revealed that there was a stronger relationship between parental engagement practices and academic outcomes for African-American students in comparison to students who were Caucasian. Additionally, a meta-analysis of studies of parental engagement across grade levels revealed that race had a significant, but weak relationship to academic outcomes (Fan & Chen, 2001).

   Within home and school environments, some studies reported lower ratings of engagement practices for parents of color when compared to Caucasian parents (Desimone, 1999; Hughes, Gleason, & Zhang, 2005; Kohl, Lengua, & McMahon, 2000; Reynolds, Weissberg, & Kasprow, 1992). Some researchers argue, however, that the definitions and measures of parental engagement stem from studies with a large Caucasian population, which may bias the manner in which the construct is measured (Lightfoot, 2004; Kim, 2009; Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2007). While minority parents are often found to be less involved in school-based forms of engagement, minority parents are engaged in practices outside of the school (Desimone, Finn-Stevenson, & Henrich, 2000; Gillandes & Jiménez, 2004; Hill & Craft, 2003). In a qualitative analysis of the reported literacy practices of Mexican immigrant parents, the researchers noted that these parents engaged in a number of practices that supported their child's literacy skills that extended beyond traditional conceptualizations of parental

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engagement. For example, these parents read mailed advertisements to their child in English, made a list of ingredients for a cake in Spanish, and taught the letters of a child's name in English. These practices were associated with higher levels of literacy achievement amongst their children in comparison to their same-grade peers.

Another comparative study of Chinese American and European American parents from similar socioeconomic backgrounds revealed similar outcomes (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009). While the European American parents were less likely to participate in school-based practices than Chinese American parents, the opposite was true for practices within the home. Chinese American parents reported systematic forms of one-on-one tutoring (i.e., using texts from libraries, workbooks from their native country), using drill and practice methods that did not always align with the methods of instruction at their child's school. European American parents, however, were more likely to volunteer at their child's school while engaging in informal practices in the home (e.g., play-based methods of instruction, providing incentives for reading a certain number of books). Such practices are echoed in other studies as well, as schools with high minority rates were more likely to report engagement in practices related to parenting and facilitating an environment that promotes learning at home than other aspects of parental engagement (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009; Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman, 2007).

Not only may parents of minority groups engage in parent-child social interactions that differ from their non-minority counterparts, but similar types of parental engagement practices may lead to alternate, if not opposing, outcomes for minority and non-minority youth (Desimone, 1999; Hill & Craft, 2003; McNeal, 1999). In a study by McNeal (1999), parent-child discussions were related to increased achievement scores

among African American and Caucasian students, although this was not the case for Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans within the study. Additionally, participation in the Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) and parental communication of expectations had a significant influence on positive behavioral outcomes for White students, while they had no effect for Hispanic and Asian students. Such findings suggest that the impact of specific parental engagement practices may not always lead to positive academic outcomes for all ethnic groups. As a result, the need to examine racial differences in values and practices is particularly important, as a general conceptualization of parental engagement may not yield beneficial results for all families (López, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, & Hernandez, 2003).

**Socioeconomic status and social class.** Research on the effects of social class reveal differences in the degree to which parents participate in certain forms of parental engagement practices. Research suggests that middle class parents are likely to have greater access to material resources such as a disposable income and flexible work schedules, which may better facilitate school-based engagement than working class and poor parents (Bratlinger, 2003; Hassrick & Schneider, 2009; Kim, 2009; Lareau, 1987). Social class differences may also relate to the types of skills that are taught within the home, as certain expectations may be transmitted from parents to children based on the experiences of the parents over the course of their development (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003; Lareau, 1987; Lareau, 2000; Ogbu, 1979; Schnee & Bose, 2010).

While there are studies that highlight lower levels of engagement among parents from low-income households, this does not mean that these parents are not involved

(Arnold, Zeljo, Doctoroff, & Ortiz, 2008; Hampton et al., 1998; Van Velsor & Orozco, 2007). Rather, a growing body of literature points out the importance and relevance of parental engagement within low-income households (Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007; Desimone, Finn-Stevenson, & Henrich, 2000; Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Mapp, 2003; Orozco, 2008). While these parents may not actively engage in school-based forms of engagement, they are engaged in alternative forms of engagement, such as promoting the value of education and creating an environment of warmth and acceptance that can facilitate school readiness (Hill, 2001; Smith, 2006; Weiss et al., 2003). As such, a broad definition of parental engagement is more likely to capture the ways that parents from low-income communities may support their child's education in traditional and non-traditional ways.

In *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*, Lareau (2007) examines the cultural logic of child-rearing practices among middle, poor, and working class families. Among middle class families, Lareau (2007) identified a child-rearing style called *concerted cultivation*, in which parents are actively engaged in the development of their child's skills and opinions. These parents tend to assign their children to very active schedules (full of extra-curricular activities), communicate with their children using limited directives, and are more likely to intervene when their child encounters struggles or conflicts. Students who are raised within such households are more likely to have developed a sense of entitlement that is evidenced in a number of ways. For example, children from such households are more likely to challenge authority, and are encouraged to be proactive when they encounter problems or struggles. Their parents model these

behaviors, as they often engage in these practices in front of their children (or they tell their children about the behaviors and outcomes).

Among the poor and working class families, however, Lareau (2007) identified child-rearing practices that she described as *accomplishment of natural growth*. These parents tend to focus on providing basic needs for the child (e.g., food, shelter, safety), while granting children more autonomy over many aspects of their daily lives and interactions. These parents tend to depend on other organizations (such as schools) to solve problems in those settings, and are less likely to challenge those within such institutions.

If the child is from a household that engages in *accomplishment of natural growth* parenting practices, the child is more likely to have their school-based needs met by the school, with minimal engagement from the parents. According to Lareau's (2007) observations, parents who utilize these child-rearing practices are more likely to defer to the institution's experience and expertise, rather than challenge those within it. On the other hand, children from *concerted cultivation* parenting households are more likely to have parents who are more actively involved in the process of gaining support for their child's needs. These findings suggest that while parents of varied social classes may engage in alternate amounts and types of parental engagement in education, parents from low-income households nonetheless possess interest and desire for their children to achieve. The manner in which these values are expressed, however, may differ in relation to social class.

**Stage of development.** Effective parental engagement strategies differ according to the child's age. Research suggests that the amount of parental engagement decreases over time, with significant differences found from elementary to middle and high school

levels of education (Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007; Adams and Christenson, 2000; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). Parental engagement practices are higher when children are in elementary school, with a steady decrease in engagement as children head to middle school and high school.

**Motivational sources of engagement.** According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's Model of the Parental Involvement Process (2005), there are multiple factors that predict a parent's decision to engage in practices that support their child's education (see Figure 1). As a part of a larger theory that explains the manner in which parental engagement affects student achievement, the first level of the theory suggests that parents' perceptions of themselves and their interactions with the world around them affect their decision to be involved in their child's education. More specifically, Hoover Dempsey & Sandler (2005) discuss three sources of motivation: *personal motivators, invitations to involvement from others, and life context variables*.

Figure 1. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's Model of the Parental Involvement Process (Level 1)

| **Parent Choice of Involvement Activities** |
|---|

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| **Personal Motivators** | | **Parent's Perceptions of Contextual Invitations to Involvement** | | | **Life Context Variables** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Role Construction | Efficacy | Invitations from school | Invitations from teacher | Invitations from child | Knowledge and Skills | Time and Energy |

Personal motivators consist of two core constructs: parental role construction and parental efficacy to help their child succeed in school. Parental role construction consists

of individual beliefs about their perceived role in their child's education. A socially constructed perception, role construction is related to the manner in which parents view child-rearing practices, child development, and the parent's role in their child's educational development. The manner in which a parent defines their role may be active or passive, which contributes to the decision to engage in limited or pronounced forms of engagement practices (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005).

Efficacy beliefs are perceptions of one's ability to execute a task that will result in a desired outcome (Bandura, 1977; 1997). Self-efficacy beliefs are key determinants in one's decision to engage in a particular action, and are related to the amount of effort one may put forth when executing a task. Self-efficacy beliefs also influence one's ability to persevere when obstacles arise, leading to persistence in the presence of difficult situations (Bandura, 1997). When parents have a high sense of efficacy for engagement practices, they are more likely to engage in activities that support their child's education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005).

Invitations to parental engagement from key stakeholders include invitations from the school in general, the teacher, and the child. Invitations from the school in general refers to the school climate, which includes parents' perceptions of the school structure, feeling welcomed within the school, and feeling respected by school staff (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Invitations from the teacher may consist of explicit invitations to assist with classroom activities, assist with homework completion, or attend workshops (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Child invitations, however, may be implicit or explicit,

from the need to assist a frustrated child with homework to a direct request to attend a school play.

Life context variables include perceptions of factors within their own lives that may affect a decision to engage in certain behaviors. This includes parent perceptions of their knowledge and skills, and well as parent perceptions of their time and energy. Parent perceptions of their personal skill sets and knowledge consist of their beliefs regarding forms of engagement that may lead to positive outcomes. While similar to the efficacy beliefs regarding their child's academic success, these beliefs are focused on the parent's efficacy beliefs toward their own skill set and knowledge base related to specific content areas. If a parent feels that their knowledge base is inadequate, they are less likely to engage in parental engagement practices that could support their child in that specific area. This could range from a specific subject area or a discussion with a teacher about an issue their child may be struggling with (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Parent perceptions of time and energy refer to their beliefs regarding the demands they have in their lives (e.g., employment, other children) that impact their decision to become involved in their child's education. With the perception of factors that place high demands on their time and energy, parents may be more likely to curtail the degree to which they are involved in their child's education (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

**Federal Policies and Mandated Partnerships**

As a part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001, also known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB Act), federal educational policy encourages parental engagement in schools. Taking the literature on parental engagement into account, the policy utilizes parental involvement as a term which is defined as

"…participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities" (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Within NCLB, these efforts are encouraged through mandated provisions that are geared toward the promotion of activities that foster active parent participation while developing partnerships between families and schools (Igo, 2002).

**Title I.** Title I was enacted in 1965 as a part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as a means of countering the effects of poverty. With Title I support, school districts that served students from low-income households were provided with funding to develop and implement programming for students. There are two means by which a school can receive Title I funding: 1) to operate a schoolwide program or 2) to operate a targeted assistance program. To receive funding for a schoolwide program, at least 40 percent of the students must come from a low-income household. Schools with less than 40 percent of students coming from a low-income household may receive funding for targeted assistance programs. Regardless of the type of program that is funded, the monies must be used to fund learning strategies and programming that is based on scientific literature, in addition to activities that promote parental engagement.

Title I funding is common throughout many school districts, with an estimate of 20 million students throughout the United States receiving services through this funding source during the 2004-2005 school year (Stullich, Eisner, & McCrary, 2007). According to a report on Title I funding, 93% of school districts within the United States received Title I funding during 2004-2005 school year, with a majority of elementary schools being recipients of the funding (Stullich, Eisner, & McCrary, 2007). The evaluation also noted that 87% of the students were a part of schoolwide programs, which highlights the

emphasis on schoolwide programs that receive Title I funding.

**Title I, Part A.** Part A of Title I is a funding provision within the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (the revised version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) that encourages the promotion of home-school partnerships with an overarching goal to assist students and families from low-income communities at the state and local level. To further encourage practices that promote parental engagement in education, , any school district that receives Title I funding must execute a number of tasks that are meant to develop such partnerships (Downer & Myers, 2010, Igo, 2002; NCLB). For example, schools that receive Title I funding (which will be referred to as Title I schools) must allocate 1% of their budget toward activities and programming that promote parental engagement, distribute annual report cards to parents regarding the school's academic performance, and garner parent participation in the development of school improvement plans. Additionally, districts with Title I schools must develop written and verbal communication procedures that keep parents informed of the events that take place within the schools (as well as their right to request information about the qualifications of the teachers within the school).

*School-parent compacts.* In an effort to create transparency between schools and families, school districts are required to develop written documentation of their parental engagement policy. Initially introduced within a set of amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) under the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (IASA), such policies continue to be present within NCLB. In collaboration with parents of children who attend the school, the school (or school district) is required by Title I policies to develop a *school-parent compact,* which is an agreement between the
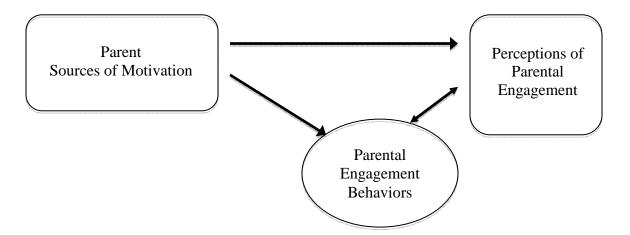
two parties that identifies the practices that parents, school staff, and students should execute to support student achievement (e.g., meet the state's academic standards). The compact is required to describe the school's role in providing high-quality curriculum and instruction, the specific ways in which parents should support their child's education, as well as the manner in which parents and teachers should communicate with each other. While signatures are not required, the document must be distributed to parents of children who attend the district.

In an analysis of school-parent compacts, Nakagawa (2000) argues that these documents often presume that parents, teachers, and families are in agreement regarding what constitutes effective engagement, which may not always be the case. Given that the school ultimately controls the contents and distribution of the school-parent compact, the current structure of the compact is likely to dictate to parents what a "good parent" does, as well as the conditions that are necessary to foster positive child outcomes (Johnson, 2007; Nakagawa, 2000). Adherence to school-parent compacts, however, may not always yield such positive results. In a study of practices within the school-parent compact and reading achievement, high rates of participation in the practices within the compact were not related to increases in reading achievement (Smith, 1998). As such, further examination of the parental engagement practices that are described within the compact could prove useful, as monitoring and assessment of the policy mandate could result in the identification of practices that may be more beneficial and applicable for parents in a given community.

**Current Study**

While research suggests a movement towards culturally relevant practice in the construction of home-school partnerships, research on the construction and use of these ideas deserves further exploration. Specifically, the practices that are encouraged within school districts should be examined further, in an effort to understand whether the proposed practices are informed by the practices that reside amongst parents within the school. Given the impetus for schools to create a plan to develop home-school partnerships via policy mandates (i.e., Title 1 within the No Child Left Behind Act), an analysis of the practices promoted within the schools can serve as a starting point to understand the connection between those practices encouraged within the schools and those which are advocated and implemented by stakeholder parents within the surrounding community.

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework for Current Study



The school-parent compact can serve as a lens to understand the perspectives of parents and administrators within a given school (see Figure 2 for the conceptual framework for this study). As a policy-mandated document, the school-parent compact pushes school districts to identify the practices that are deemed essential to positive academic and social outcomes, which ultimately contribute to success in these areas.

While there are a few studies that explicitly examine school-parent compacts, studies that specifically examine factors that contribute to the implementation of practices within school-parent compacts have yet to be explored (Nakagawa, 2000; Smith, 1998). An investigation of school-parent compacts would shed light on factors that may contribute to the engagement (or lack thereof) with certain types of behaviors that were identified as integral to student success. By examining the content of school-parent compacts in comparison to parental definitions and practices, it could help school staff and administrators better understand the manner in which parents participate in their child's education within low-income communities.

The impact of parent cognitions that may impact participation of practices within the school-parent compact is another area that deserves further exploration. Cognitions and environmental factors contribute to the decision to engage in certain behaviors (Bandura, 2001). More specifically, Hoover Dempsey & Sandler's Model of the Parental Involvement Process (1995; 2005) suggest that specific practices such as motivational beliefs, perceptions of invitations to become involved, as well as life context variables contribute to a parent's decision to participate in parental engagement. While the model hypothesizes the relationship between these factors and home and school-based practices, the model has not been tested in relation to practices identified as a part of a school district's Parental Involvement Plan (and, more specifically, practices that are identified within the school-parent compact).

Moreover, while the revised version of the model has been tested among Latino parents in urban school districts in the United States, a large urban district in the Southwestern United States, a metropolitan school district in the mid-South, as well as

Jewish and Arab parents in Israel, the model could benefit from additional testing in more varied populations (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Green et al., 2005; Lavenda, 2011; Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2011). Specifically, the model has not been tested to understand decision-making practices related to parental engagement using a specific population that focuses on predominately low-income parents and families. As such, an investigation of the relationship between these factors and the participation in practices that are described in the school-parent compact within a low-income community is important in the research on factors that encourage parental engagement. This could add to information regarding the generalizability of the model when used within a specific population.

**Research questions and hypotheses.** There are five primary research questions that this study examined:

*Research question 1.* How is parental engagement defined in school-parent compacts at the district level? Based on prior research, it was expected that activities related to homework completion and school-based engagement practices (e.g., volunteering at school, attending parent-teacher conferences) would be promoted (Smith, 1998; Nakagawa, 2000). Practices in the realm of parenting and decision-making, however, were expected to be promoted less (Nakagawa, 2000).

*Research question 2.* Research question 2 consists of two sub-questions: (a) In what ways are parents engaged in practices defined within the school-parent compacts? (b) Which parental engagement practices described within the school-parent compact do parents report engaging in? Based on previous research, it was hypothesized that parents would report less participation in activities that are relegated to the school, with greater

participation in activities that within the home and community. This coincides with previous research on parental engagement in low-income households, in which school-directed practices were not used often within these families (Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman, 2007; Mapp, 2003).

  ***Research question 3.*** Research question 3 consists of two sub-questions: (a) How do parents define their engagement? (b) How do parent definitions of their parental engagement practices differ from practices defined in school-parent compacts? While exploratory, literature suggests that parents would be more likely to describe engagement practices reflecting Lareau's (2003) *accomplishment of natural growth.* The parents may be more likely to describe engagement in terms of caring for basic needs and creating structure within the home, with limited reference to a need to be directly involved in their child's school.  It is hypothesized that the practices defined by the parents would differ from the practices within the compact, which may be more likely to detail more school-based behaviors (Nakagawa, 2000).

  ***Research question 4.*** Research question 4 consists of four separate sub-questions: (a) How are parent sources of motivation towards parental engagement related to parent reports of practices described within the school-parent compact? (b) How are parent reports of motivational beliefs related to parent reports of practices described within the school-parent compact? (c) How are parent reports of invitations to involvement related to parent reports of practices described within the school-parent compact? (d) How are parent reports of life context variables related to parent reports of practices described within the school-parent compact? In accordance with the model of the Parental Involvement Process, all of the variables in the first level of the model (i.e., reports of

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personal motivation beliefs, parent reports of invitations to become involved, life context variables) should significantly predict reports of the practices described in the school-parent compact (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). Previous research suggests that personal motivation beliefs should account for the most variance, followed by invitations to become involved and life context variables (Green et al., 2005).

 ***Research question 5.*** In what ways do parents' lived experiences with parental engagement in education explain reported behaviors described in the school-parent compact? While the nature of this question is geared toward an exploratory examination, it is hypothesized that parents' personal experiences with parental engagement and home-school partnerships would reflect their participation in practices defined in school-parent compacts. As such, parents who define the parental role in home-school partnerships using primarily school-based practices would be more likely to engage in practices within the compact, while parents who view their role in home-school partnerships as separate from the school would be less likely to participate in practices that were identified within the compact.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD
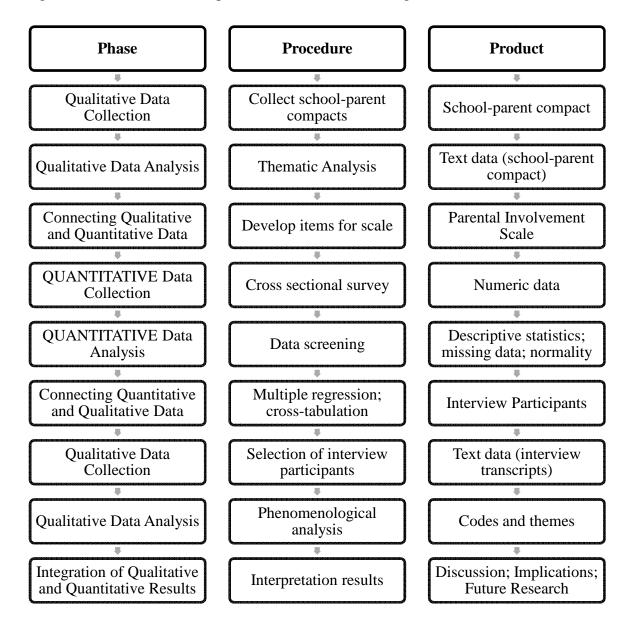
**Research Design**

In order to examine the questions of interest, I utilized a mixed methods design, which integrates quantitative and qualitative data within a single study (Creswell, 2009). Given the strengths and limitations of both approaches, a mixed methods approach to research can allow for an in-depth exploration of phenomena that neither methodology could provide in isolation (Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006). Thus, a mixed methods approach can expand and enrich the findings of a single method to better understand parental engagement and home-school partnerships.

I collected and analyzed qualitative and quantitative methods in a sequential fashion, as the data gained from each approach allowed for further understanding of parental engagement and home-school partnerships in low-income communities (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989 from Creswell, 2009). Specifically, I used a sequential explanatory strategy for data collection and analysis (Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The sequential strategy (see Figure 3) allowed for the initial collection of qualitative and quantitative data, which in turn, informed the collection of additional qualitative data. The first phase consisted of a qualitative thematic analysis of parent and district-level definitions of parental engagement, followed by a quantitative analysis of survey data (within the second phase) that tested a hypothesis about the variables related to the decision-making processes in parental engagement in education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). During the final phase of the study, I conducted phenomenological interviews regarding parental engagement and

home-school partnerships. Each phase of the study informed the following phase, and I

integrated and analyzed all of the data sources to answer the research questions.

Figure 3. Visual Model of Sequential Mixed Methods Design Procedures

| **Phase** | **Procedure** | **Product** |
|---|---|---|
| Qualitative Data Collection | Collect school-parent compacts | School-parent compact |
| Qualitative Data Analysis | Thematic Analysis | Text data (school-parent compact) |
| Connecting Qualitative and Quantitative Data | Develop items for scale | Parental Involvement Scale |
| QUANTITATIVE Data Collection | Cross sectional survey | Numeric data |
| QUANTITATIVE Data Analysis | Data screening | Descriptive statistics; missing data; normality |
| Connecting Quantitative and Qualitative Data | Multiple regression; cross-tabulation | Interview Participants |
| Qualitative Data Collection | Selection of interview participants | Text data (interview transcripts) |
| Qualitative Data Analysis | Phenomenological analysis | Codes and themes |
| Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Results | Interpretation results | Discussion; Implications; Future Research |

**Setting**

Pseudonyms are used in place of actual names of people and places unless

otherwise noted. I recruited participants for this study from community agencies and

schools in "Sunnydale" and its surrounding areas. Sunnydale is a city in the Midwestern

United States.   According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau, residents of Sunnydale

are primarily African-American with a median household income of $34,402. According

to United States Census measures from 2007-2011, 33.2% of the population of Sunnydale

lived at or below poverty income levels during that time period (U.S. Census Bureau,

2013). Appendix B provides additional demographic information about Sunnydale.

"Pine View Services" is a private, non-profit agency that provides a range of

services to children, parents, and families in a metropolitan area in the Midwestern

United States. Such services include early childhood development programs, parenting

programs, child mental health services, after-school programs, and an emergency shelter

for children.  I contacted the Manager of School-Based Programs for Pine View Services

regarding the research project, who agreed to allow me to recruit participants primarily

through Pine View Services. Although Pine View has multiple sites, I conducted the

research through the location in Sunnydale. In addition to Pine View Services, I

expanded recruitment to summer camp programs offered through the city of Sunnydale.

As the research project progressed, I expanded the recruitment to "Brook View

Elementary," which is a part of the "Green Meadows" District. At these latter sites,

teachers gave students pre-addressed, pre-stamped envelopes with surveys and consent

forms inviting parents to participate in the study. These varied recruitment sites allowed

me to gain access to parents with a range of engagement practices with their child's

school.

In order to participate in this research study, participants were required to be a

parent or guardian of an elementary school student (in kindergarten through fifth grade)

in one of two focal school districts that serve students in Sunnydale (Cedar or Green Meadows). Participants could attend any of the elementary schools within the two school districts. These two school districts were identified because Pine View provides direct services and programming to parents of these districts, and district lines indicate that they are two of the four districts that service students and families in the city of Sunnydale. All of the elementary schools in the two school districts received Title I funding and were identified as school-wide Title I programs during the 2011-2012 academic year. Reflecting the demographic characteristics of Sunnydale, a majority of the students within the districts were African American. Additionally, a majority of students in both districts qualified for free and reduced lunch, which is used by school districts as an indicant of the number of low-income households that are served by schools. Appendix C provides additional demographic characteristics of the school districts and elementary schools.

Based on power analyses using G*Power analysis software for a multiple regression analysis (the primary statistical analysis for this study), a minimum of 140 participants were required for 95% power for detecting a large effect size, assuming an alpha level of 0.05 and a two-tailed test.

**Recruitment, Consent, and Assent**

Participants were recruited through several programs that are offered at Pine View Services. Specifically, I was allowed to recruit participants through the Parent Empowerment Program (a parenting workshop that occurs once a month on Saturdays), Parent Nights for parents of students who are in the After-School Program, and Parent Advisory meetings. For each of these events, I was provided with time during the

program's schedule to describe the research study. I invited interested parents to come to a table in the back of the room (where I was located) at the end of the program. Once there, I provided interested parents were with a packet containing two copies of the survey consent form (see Appendix D), a copy of the survey, and a recruitment flyer for the parent interview. Upon completion of the survey, I provided each participant with a gift card to a local store. In addition to these recruitment efforts, I recruited participants at the after-school program sites that were administered by the Manager of School-Based Services at Pine View. Site coordinators provided interested parents with the packet of research materials (in addition to a gift card request). Using a similar recruitment strategy, recruitment also took place at select Headstart programs. Participants returned the completed surveys and consent forms to a folder at the school that was marked for completed packets.

Additionally, I was granted permission by the principal to recruit participants directly through one of the elementary schools in Green Meadows (Brook View Elementary). In this setting, I distributed pre-addressed, pre-stamped envelopes to all of the teachers at the school. I provided teachers with a written "script" to explain the study to the students prior to distributing the envelopes. Interested parents were asked to complete and mail the survey, consent form, and gift card request. Upon receipt of the survey, I (with the support of a research assistant) mailed the gift card to the addresses listed on the gift card requests

For the interview portion of the study, I recruited a stratified purposeful sample of parents from the overall survey sample. Attached to the end of the survey, a flyer briefly described the interview portion of the study (see Appendix E). Participants indicated their

potential interest in the interview portion of the study by checking a box marked "yes" or "no." Interested participants provided their name, email address, phone number, and preferred method of contact at the end of the flyer. Participants returned this to me via the pre-addressed envelope along with the survey. I contacted the participants who indicated interest in the interview for future participation.

Upon collection of the survey data, I analyzed the Parental Engagement Practices Scale (PEP). In order to identify participants for the interview portion of the study, I used SPSS software to create three groups after standardizing the PEP (by transforming them into Z scores). PEP scores were divided according to a quartile split. A quartile split divides the data into 3 groups using the median as a guide. As a result, the bottom 25% of the data would be in the first quartile, the second and third quartile were combined to comprise the middle 50%, and the top 25% were in the fourth quartile. Among the parents who indicated interest in participating in the interview, I interviewed four individuals from each of the three groups based on their score on the standardized PEP scale, for a total of 12 participants. I contacted participants via email or phone based on their preferred method of contact. Those who agreed to participate read and signed a consent form prior to the interview and were given a copy (see Appendix F). I also read the consent form aloud to aid in understanding of the content. As a part of the consent process, I questioned the participants about their willingness to allow the interview to be recorded to aid the transcription process. 11 out of the 12 participants allowed me to record the interview. During the remaining participant's interview (who did not authorize audio recording), I took careful notes during and after the interview. The entire interview

(including the consent process) lasted from 20-60 minutes. Interview participants

received a $30 gift certificate to a local store..

**Participants**

I collected a total of 165 surveys as a result of the broad recruitment efforts. I

included surveys that identified the school district that their child attended school. As a

result, I used the surveys from a total of 157 respondent for analysis. Appendix G

displays the overall demographic characteristics of the sample. The sample was 86%

female and consisted of 63.6 % African American, 27.9% White/Caucasian, 2.5%

Asian/Asian American, 2.5% Bi-racial, 1.9% Other, and 1.3% Hispanic/Hispanic-

American parents.  The participants had a median annual income between $10,001 and

$20,000.  Participants ranged in age from 24 to 53 with a median age of 34 years.  A

majority of the participants were single parents. A majority of the participants (93.8 %)

reported that their home language was English. The median total of family members in

the home was 4, and the median number of total children in the home was 3.

Socioeconomic status was examined by examining a number of factors (i.e.,

educational level, employment, and income).  In terms of education, 28% of the sample

completed at least a year of college and 29% completed high school or received a GED.

In regards to employment, 43.9% of the participants worked full time and 37% were

unemployed, followed by 16.1% part time, and 1.9% irregular employment (that is not

considered part or full time).

When completing the survey, parents were asked to consider a specific child, or

focal child, as they responded to the questions. A majority of participants (90.3%)

reported that they were the biological parent of the focal child. Among the focal children,

50.7% were female. In terms of grade level, 22.4% were in the fourth grade, followed by third (20.4%), first (16.3%), fifth (15.6%), kindergarten (13.6%), and second grade (11.6%).

A majority (78.3%) of the children attended Green Meadows District, with 21.7% in Cedar School District (see Tables 1 through 3 for demographic characteristics by school district). I utilized chi-square tests of independence to examine differences across the major demographic measures and indicated significant associations between school district and race, child gender, child grade, and total children in the home. In terms of race, Green Meadows District had a higher percentage of White participants than Cedar School District (34.7% versus 3%, respectively), and a lower percentage of African-American participants, at 57.9% versus 84.8%, $X^2$(5, n= 154)= 24.96, p = .00, Cramer's V= .40. A higher percentage of male students attended Cedar School District compared to Green Meadows School District (67.7% versus 44.5%, respectively), $X^2$ (1, n= 150)= 5.30, p = .02, phi= .19. The distribution across grade levels also differed between the two school districts, $X^2$ (5, n= 147)= 29.61, p = .00, Cramer's V= .45. Cedar School District had a higher percentage of kindergarten (40.0%) and third grade (30.0%) focal children than Green Meadows School District (6.8% and 17.9%, respectively). The Green Meadows District (6.8% and 17.9%, respectively). The Green Meadows District participants appeared to be more evenly distributed across grades than the Cedar participants.

Demographic information regarding the interview participants (and associated pseudonyms) can be found in Figure 3. All of the participants were female, biological

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of School Districts as a Percentage of the Sample (Gender, Parent Race, Home Language, and Parent Marital Status)

|  | Cedar (N= 34) | Green Meadows (N= 123) |
|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | | |
| Male | 22.6 | 11.6 |
| Female | 77.7 | 88.4 |
| **Parent Race** | | |
| Asian/Asian-American | 0.0 | 3.3 |
| Black/African-American | 84.8 | 57.9 |
| White/Caucasian | 3.0 | 34.7 |
| Hispanic/Hispanic-American | 0.0 | 1.7 |
| Bi-racial | 3.0 | 2.5 |
| Other | 3.0 | 2.5 |
| **Home Language** | | |
| English | 87.5 | 95.6 |
| Other | 12.5 | 4.4 |
| **Parent Marital Status** | | |
| Married | 39.4 | 33.9 |
| Single | 57.6 | 50.4 |
| Separated | 0 | 5.0 |
| Divorced | 3.0 | 10.7 |

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of School Districts as a Percentage of the Sample
Parent Educational Status, and Employment Status)

|  | Cedar (N= 34) | Green Meadows (N= 123) |
|---|---|---|
| **Parent Educational Status** | | |
| Less than seventh grade | 0 | 2.5 |
| Middle school | 0 | 2.5 |
| Part of high school | 9.1 | 4.1 |
| High school or GED | 15.2 | 32.8 |
| Part of college | 27.3 | 27.9 |
| 2-year program or vocational school | 15.2 | 13.9 |
| Bachelor's degree | 30.3 | 15.6 |
| Master's degree | 3.0 | 0.8 |
| **Employment Status** | | |
| Unemployed | 36.4 | 37.7 |
| Irregular Employment | 0 | 12.5 |
| Regular Employment | 6.1 | 5.7 |
| Part Time | 27.3 | 13.1 |
| Full Time | 30.3 | 41.0 |
| **Family Income** | | |
| Less than 5k | 15.2 | 16.2 |
| 5001-10k | 18.2 | 18.0 |
| 10001-20k | 24.2 | 18.0 |
| 20001-30k | 21.2 | 18.9 |
| 30001-35k | 3.0 | 9.0 |
| 35001-40k | 6.1 | 5.4 |
| 4001-45k | 0.0 | 3.6 |
| Over 45k | 12.1 | 10.8 |

Table 3. Demographic Characteristics of School Districts as a Percentage of the Sample (Parent Role to Child, Child Gender, and Child Grade)

| | Cedar (N= 34) | Green Meadows (N= 123) |
|---|---|---|
| **Parent Role to Child** | | |
| Biological mother/father | 93.9 | 89.3 |
| Brother/sister | 0.0 | 3.3 |
| Grandparent | 3.0 | 5.0 |
| Aunt/uncle | 0.0 | 0.8 |
| Boyfriend/girlfriend of the parent | 3.0 | 0.8 |
| Other | 0.0 | 0.8 |
| **Child Gender** | | |
| Male | 67.7 | 44.5 |
| Female | 32.3 | 55.5 |
| **Child Grade** | | |
| Kindergarten | 40.0 | 6.8 |
| 1st | 3.3 | 19.7 |
| 2nd | 3.3 | 13.7 |
| 3rd | 30.0 | 17.9 |
| 4th | 16.7 | 23.9 |
| 5th | 6.7 | 17.9 |

mothers.

**Phase 1: Examination of School-parent Compact Behaviors**

   **School-parent compact.** I collected a copy of the school-parent from each targeted school district (see Appendix H for the school-parent compact items). In order to access the Cedar School District school-parent compact, I contacted the district Parent Coordinator, who sent me the document upon explanation of the study. The Green Meadows District compact was acquired on my behalf by a staff member from Pine View Services, who contacted the Assistant Principal at Cherry Tree Elementary, one of the elementary schools at Green Meadows about the research study. Once collected, I examined the portion of the compact that is related to parents.

**Phase 2: Parent Participation in Compact Behaviors**

   **Demographic Questionnaire.** I used a 17-item survey in order to gather information about the demographic characteristics of the participants that were related to parental engagement practices according to previous research (see Appendix I for the demographic survey). Within the survey, I asked about demographic characteristics such as race/ethnicity, gender, age, and socioeconomic status (as measured by income, employment, and educational level).

   **Helping Children in School: Open-ended Question.** I used one open-ended question in order to allow parents to report their parental engagement practices (see Appendix J). Following a prompt that suggests that there are no "right" or "wrong" ways to help a child succeed in school, the parent responded to the following question: "How do you help your child be successful in school?"

**Parental Engagement Practices Scale.** To measure the degree to which parents were involved in practices discussed within the school-parent compact, I created a scale based on the items within the compact (see Appendix K). A group of four graduate student colleagues were used to pilot the survey questions. After creating a draft version of the survey, I emailed the survey to graduate student peers. I asked these peers to respond to the logic, structure, and readability of the questions. The graduate student peers provided me with feedback was via email. The graduate student peers provided suggestions regarding ways to clarify terms, separate phrases within the compact into distinct items that measured different aspects of an item within the compact, and suggested a different scale for certain items. As a result of the feedback, the statements within the compact were adapted to coincide with a scale that measured frequency of the practices.

Based on the feedback, most items in the scale used a six-point Likert format that asked parents to indicate how often, on average, they engaged in the practices since the beginning of the school year: 1 = never; 2 = 1 or 2 times; 3 = 4 or 5 times; 4 = once a week; 5 = a few times a week; 6 = daily. Items that discussed participation in events (e.g., Parent Teacher conferences) were based on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = Never; 2 = Rarely; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Every time). The specific items for the scale were based upon the practices discussed within the compacts. Compacts for the two districts differed, and within one district (Cedar) the two elementary schools (Cypress and Mulberry) had two different compacts.

The resulting survey for Cypress Elementary School in Cedar School District had

Figure 4. Characteristics of Interview Participants

| Participant | Michelle | Angela | Christine | Elaine | Linda | Alana |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Female | Female | Female | Female | Female | Female |
| Race | Black/African-American | Black/African-American | Black/African-American | Black/African-American | Black/African-American | Bi-racial |
| Age | 28 | 40 | 39 | 30 | 28 | 30 |
| Marital Status | Single | Single | Single | Married | Single | Single |
| Educational Level | 2-year program or vocational school | Part of college (at least 1 year) | Bachelor's degree | Bachelor's degree | Bachelor's degree | Part of college (at least 1 year) |
| Spouse Educational Level | No Spouse | No Spouse | No Spouse | High school or GED | High school or GED | No Spouse |
| Employment | Part time | Unemployed | Unemployed | Irregular Employment | Full time | Full time |
| Income | Less than 5k | Less than 5k | 5001-10k | 30001-35k | 20001-30k | 10001-20k |
| Home Language | English | English | English | English | English | Other |
| Role to Child | Biological mother | Biological mother | Biological mother | Biological mother | Biological mother | Biological mother |
| Child Gender | Female | Male | Male | Female | Female | Male |
| Child Grade | 3rd | Kindergarten | 4th | Kindergarten | 2nd | 1st |
| School District | Cedar | Cedar | Cedar | Green Meadows | Cedar | Cedar |
| Total Family | 4 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 3 | 4 |
| Total Children | 3 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 3 |

Figure 4 (cont'd)

| Participant | Mary | Danielle | Jeanette | Krystal | Tatiana | Yvette |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Female | Female | Female | Female | Female | Female |
| Race | Black/African-American | Black/African-American | Hispanic/Hispanic-American | Black/African-American | White/Caucasian | White/Caucasian |
| Age | 39 | 32 | 29 | 32 | 31 | Missing |
| Marital Status | Divorced | Married | Single | Separated | Single | Single |
| Educational Level | 2-year program or vocational school | Bachelor's degree | Bachelor's degree | Part of college (at least 1 year) | 2-year program or vocational school | Bachelor's degree |
| Spouse Educational Level | 2-year program or vocational school | 2-year program or vocational school | Part of college (at least 1 year) | High school of GED | No Spouse | No spouse |
| Employment | Unemployed | Unemployed | Full time | Unemployed | Full time | Full time |
| Income | 10001-20k | 10001-20k | 35001-40k | Less than 5k | 20001-30k | Over 45k |
| Home Language | English | English | English | English | English | English |
| Role to Child | Biological mother | Biological mother | Biological mother | Biological mother | Biological mother | Biological mother |
| Child Gender | Female | Male | Female | Female | Female | Female |
| Child Grade | 3rd | 2nd | 1st | 2nd | 4th | 2nd |
| School District | Green Meadows | Green Meadows | Green Meadows | Green Meadows | Green Meadows | Green Meadows |
| Total Family | 2 | 6 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 4 |
| Total Children | 1 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 2 |

8 items, with a total score ranging from 8 to 44.  The survey for Mulberry had 14 items, with a total score ranging from 14 to 72. The survey for Green Meadows School District had 16 items that ranged from 16 to 96. Higher scores indicated higher levels of participation in the identified practices.

**Parental Role Construction for Involvement in the Child's Education Scale: Role Activity Beliefs (RAB) and Valence toward School (VAS).** According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (2005) model of the Parental Involvement Process, parents construct their role in their child's education based upon their beliefs regarding appropriate practices that relate to their child's education as well as their perception of their own previous experiences with schools as a youth. In accordance with this model, I measured parental role construction using two subscales created by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005): the Role Activity Beliefs Scale and the Valence Toward School Scale. Correlational analyses from previous studies revealed that the two measures are uncorrelated ($r$= .08), supporting the notion that the two surveys measured different aspects of role construction (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005).

The Role Activity Beliefs Scale (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005) was a 10-item scale that examined parent perceptions of practices that they should be engaged in relation to their child's education. Prefaced by the statement, "I believe it is my responsibility…" was a list of 10 practices that were related to the development of partnerships with schools? (e.g., "…to help my child with homework."). All items were presented in a six-point Likert scale response format, ranging from "disagree very strongly" to "agree very strongly" (1 =

Disagree very strongly; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Disagree just a little; 4 = Agree just a little; 5 = Agree; 6 = Agree very strongly).

The Valence Toward School Scale (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Walker et al., 2005) consisted of 6 items related to parent's experiences with various aspects of the school (e.g., school, teachers, school experience). For each area, respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which a pair of adjectives described their feelings and emotions of their school experience (e.g., disliked/liked, were mean/were nice). All items were presented in a six-point Likert scale format with each of the descriptors and adjectives at opposing ends of the scale (see Appendix L). Cronbach's alpha for Role Activity Beliefs and Valence Toward School for the current study were .88 and .94, respectively.

**Parental Self-Efficacy for Helping the Child Succeed in School Scale (PSE).** The Parental Efficacy for Helping the Child Succeed in School Scale (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Walker et al., 2005) was a 7-item scale that measured parent's perceptions of their ability to influence their child's educational outcomes. All items had a six-point Likert scale response format, ranging from "disagree very strongly" to "agree very strongly" (1 = Disagree very strongly; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Disagree just a little; 4 = Agree just a little; 5 = Agree; 6 = Agree very strongly). Four of the items were reverse-coded (e.g., "Other children have more influence on my child's grades than I do.") and the remainder of the items were coded according to the standard scale (see Appendix M). The Cronbach's alpha for the current study was .75.

**Parents' Perceptions of Personal Knowledge and Skills Scale (PPK).** This 9-item scale (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Walker et al., 2005) examined parent perceptions of their skill set and knowledge base that could potentially assist their child.

Face and content validity were established using a group of five individuals that possessed expert knowledge in the content area (Walker et al., 2005). Parents were asked to indicate the degree to which they agree with a list of statements related to these areas (e.g., "I know effective ways to contact my child's teacher.") All items had a six-point Likert scale response format (see Appendix N), ranging from "disagree very strongly" to "agree very strongly" (1 = Disagree very strongly; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Disagree just a little; 4 = Agree just a little; 5 = Agree; 6 = Agree very strongly). Cronbach's alpha for the current study was .84.

**Parents' Perceptions of Personal Time and Energy Scale (PPT).** This 6-item scale (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Walker et al., 2005) examined parent perceptions regarding the demands that could influence their ability to participate in home and school-based parental engagement practices. Prefaced with the statement "I have enough time and energy to…", parents were asked to rate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with a list of statements (e.g., All items used a six-point Likert scale response format, ranging from "disagree very strongly" to "agree very strongly" (1 = Disagree very strongly; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Disagree just a little; 4 = Agree just a little; 5 = Agree; 6 = Agree very strongly). The scale can be viewed in Appendix O. Cronbach's alpha for the current study was .76.

**Parental Perceptions of General Invitations for Involvement from the School Scale (PGI).** This measure (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Walker et al., 2005) consisted of a 6-item scale (see Appendix P) that inquired about parent perceptions of general invitations to their child's school to become involved in their child's education. Parents indicated the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with statements about

their perceptions regarding the school's climate, feelings of empowerment, and school-parent communication practices. Parents also indicated an approximate number of times their child's teacher engaged in certain practices (e.g., "My child's teacher asked me or expected me to help my child with homework."). All items used a six-point Likert scale response format from 1 (1= disagree very strongly) to 6 (6=agree very strongly). Cronbach's alpha for the current study was .84.

**Parents' Perceptions of Specific Invitations for Involvement from the Teacher Scale (PST).** This measure (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Walker et al., 2005) consisted of a 6-item scale (see Appendix Q) that inquired about parent perceptions of the times in which their child's teacher has made direct attempts to engage them in their child's education. More specifically, parents were asked to report the approximate number of times that a teacher engaged in certain practices from the start of the school year up until the date of the survey's completion. Parents were asked to indicate the approximate number of times their child's teacher engaged in certain practices (e.g., "My child's teacher asked me or expected me to help my child with homework."). All items in the scale used a six-point Likert response format (never to daily): 1 = never; 2 = 1 or 2 times; 3 = 4 or 5 times; 4 = once a week; 5 = a few times a week; 6 = daily. The measure achieved satisfactory face and content validity with a panel of five people with expert knowledge in the area (Walker et al., 2005). The final version of the measure was tested with a sample of 495 parents in a diverse metropolitan area (α = .81). Cronbach's alpha for the current study was .84.

**Parents' Perceptions of Specific Invitations for Involvement from the Child Scale (PSC).** This measure (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Walker et al., 2005)

consisted of a 6-item scale (see Appendix R) regarding parent perceptions of the times in which their child made attempts to encourage the parent to become involved in their child's education. Constructed using relevant theory and conceptual discussions, face and content validity were established using a panel with expert knowledge in the area, and was deemed satisfactory (Walker et al., 2005). Parents were asked to report the approximate number of times that a child requested that the parent engage in a range of activities (e.g., "My child asked me to supervise his or her homework"; "My child talked with me about the school day."). All items in the scale used a six-point Likert response format (never to daily): 1 = never; 2 = 1 or 2 times; 3 = 4 or 5 times; 4 = once a week; 5 = a few times a week; 6 = daily. Cronbach's alpha for the current study was .75.

**Phase 3: Parents' Experiences with Parental Engagement and School-Parent Compacts**

    **Parent interview.** I created a semi-structured interview that examined parent perceptions and experiences with home-school partnerships as well as their perceptions of the compact for their child's school district. The semi-structured nature of the interview allowed for some flexibility, including the ability to probe and encourage additional details should the need arise. The interview was designed to last 45-60 minutes (see Appendix S for interview protocol).

    I developed the structure of the interview in accordance with an adapted version of the in-depth phenomenological approach discussed by Seidman (2006), which allows for the researcher to examine the participants' lived experiences with parental engagement and home-school partnerships. The first part of the interview provided context by asking the participants to discuss their previous experiences with schooling

and parental engagement in education (more specifically, what their parents did to support their education). The interview then proceeded to ask participants to discuss their lived experiences with parental engagement (e.g., practices their parents were engaged in) as well as their experiences with home-school partnerships within their child's school. Finally, I asked participants to engage in "meaning-making," in which they were be asked to construct their definition of a "home-school partnership" based on the aforementioned topics (Creswell, 2007).

After this portion of the interview, parents were presented with the school-parent compact for their child's school district. After looking it over together, participants were asked about their thoughts regarding the school and parent portions of the compact. Participants were asked to expand upon their thoughts about the "parent" portion of the compact, and discuss items that they would either add or remove to the "parent" section of the compact.

Figure 5 summarizes the questions and data sources within the study in its entirety.

**Data Analyses**

For the quantitative portion of the study, I used statistical software to analyze the data. The reliability and validity of survey instruments, as well as convenience sampling and other standard statistical methods were used to dictate the analysis and interpretation of the quantitative results of this study.

For the qualitative data, I utilized a transcription service and coded the data using NVivo software (a qualitative data analysis software program). Using an interpretive phenomenological analysis as described by Smith and Osborn (2007), I used a multi-step

approach to analyze the qualitative interviews. Upon reading one of the transcripts

several times, I developed memos from which I identified themes. I used the emergent

Figure 5. Research Questions and Related Data Sources

| Question | Data Source(s) |
|---|---|
| 1. How is parental engagement defined in school-parent compacts at the district level? | School-parent compacts (Cedar School District, Green Meadows District) |
| 2A. In what ways are parents engaged in practices defined within the school-parent compacts? | Parent Engagement Practices Scale |
| 2B., Which parental engagement practices described within the school-parent compact do parents report engaging in? | Parent Engagement Practices Scale |
| 3A. How do parents define their engagement? | Survey-Helping Children in School |
| 3B. How do parent definitions of their parental engagement practices differ from practices defined in school-parent compacts? | Survey-Helping Children in School; School-parent compacts (Cedar School District, Green Meadows District) |
| 4A.How are parent sources of motivation towards parental engagement related to parent reports of practices described within the school-parent compact? | Survey (PEP, RAB, VAL, PSE, PGI, PST, PSC, PPK, PPT) |
| 4B. How are parent reports of motivational beliefs related to parent reports of practices described within the school-parent compact? | Survey (PEP, PGI, PST, PSC) |
| 4C. How are parent reports of invitations to involvement related to parent reports of practices described within the school-parent compact? | Survey (PEP, PGI, PST, PSC) |
| 4D. How are parent reports of life context variables related to parent reports of practices described within the school-parent compact? | Survey (PEP, PPK, PPT) |
| 5. In what ways do parents' lived experiences with parental engagement in education explain reported behaviors described in the school-parent compact. | Interviews; Survey-Helping Children in School; School-parent compacts from Cedar School District and Green Meadows District; Survey (PEP, RAB, VAL, PSE, PGI, PST, PSC, PPK, PPT) |

themes to develop clusters of themes in order to analyze the rest of the transcripts. I revised the themes as evidence within the transcripts suggested alternate or additional themes where appropriate.

To establish the trustworthiness, or validity, of the data, I used a number of strategies (Creswell, 2009). I used the triangulation of data approach, which calls for the use of multiple data sources to support findings within the analysis, as I analyzed the interviews, document analysis (i.e., school-parent compacts), and survey data. To express the themes within the analysis, I provided a thick description of the data. Thick description of the themes allows the researcher to provide detailed analyses of the results in a manner that enables readers to understand phenomena in a realistic fashion (Creswell, 2009).

To further establish the validity of the findings, doctoral student peers within the College of Education who are familiar with qualitative methodology functioned as peer examiners for the researcher to engage in peer debriefing. As peer examiners, I shared analytic memos to inquire about and explore alternative interpretations of the data. In addition to the aforementioned, it was also important for me to clarify any preconceptions or assumptions that I may have brought to the research given my personal background and experiences. As a result, I disclosed these biases and assumptions in the section of the dissertation entitled "Role of the Researcher." Each of these efforts are used commonly within qualitative research in order to enhance the credibility and reliability of the qualitative findings (Creswell, 2009).

**Role of the Researcher**

When conducting research, it is important to identify potential biases and assumptions that may influence the lens of the researcher (Creswell, 2009; Starks & Trinidad, 2007). The experiences of the researcher may not always serve as a liability; in fact, in some cases it may turn out to be an asset that could lead to heightened sensitivity to issues that strengthen the data analyses.

For the qualitative portion of the study, it is important to consider my worldview as the researcher, given the potentially subjective nature of the analyses. My perspectives regarding parental engagement and home-school partnerships stem from a variety of personal and work experiences. As a person from a middle-class African-American household (in which both parents held a Bachelor's degree or higher), my parents constantly discussed the value of education, and structured their household in a manner that emphasized the importance of education with rules about homework completion and rewarding positive school behavior. While both parents emphasized these points, neither of them was active in school-based activities (e.g., attending parent-teacher conferences, participating in the school's parent-teacher association). This contributes to my personal perspective regarding parental engagement, as I believe that both of my parents were active participants within my education, despite their limited presence at the school.

As a professional, I worked as an Educational Liaison for a set of foster care group homes for female adolescents in a large, metropolitan area in the Western United States for approximately a year prior to my graduate work. There, I interacted with teachers, school administrators, and other school staff to collaborate on specific ways in which group home staff and school staff could work together to support the educational

needs of the children we worked with. Recently, my work as a school psychologist in training has allowed me to interact with parents from varied income levels, as well as teachers and school staff in rural, suburban, and urban areas with a variety of expectations regarding parental engagement and home-school partnerships.

I believe that these experiences contribute to my perspective on parental engagement and home-school partnerships, as I believe that these practices are varied and multifaceted. My experience with a variety of parents and school professionals allowed me to acknowledge varied definitions and perspectives regarding parental engagement. At the same time, these experiences also contributed to biases that I brought to this study. I came to this study with an assumption that school staff tend to have very narrow views regarding parental engagement practices, which leads to limited and negative perspectives regarding children of parents from low-income families.

My experiences (and knowledge of the research) also lead me to believe that low-income families are less likely to engage in some of the practices that are often touted as important aspects of parental engagement. Despite such lack of engagement, I also believe that children from households with parents who do not engage in such practices can still be successful in school. As such, I question the emphasis that is often placed on practices that require parents to come to school, as I believe that parents can support their child's education in a number of other ways.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Data were entered and scored on a computer that was password protected. A

research assistant assisted in the data entry. Upon completion of data entry, I examined

the data using descriptive statistics in order to identify errors. I calculated descriptive

statistics (e.g., mean, median, standard deviation, variance, and internal consistency) for

each variable. In addition, I conducted preliminary analyses in order to examine statistical

assumptions. Finally, I analyzed the results from the research questions of interest.

**Preliminary Data**

**Descriptive Data.** I computed descriptive statistics for the eight independent

variables of interest, as well as the scores on the Parental Engagement Practices Scales.

The eight independent variables included Role Activity Beliefs (RAB), Valence toward

School (VAS), Parental Self-Efficacy for Helping the Child Succeed in School (PSE),

Parental Perceptions of General Invitations for Involvement from the School (PGI),

Parents' Perceptions of Specific Invitations for Involvement from the Teacher. (PST),

Parents' Perceptions of Specific Invitations for Involvement from the Child Scale. (PSC),

Parents' Perceptions of Personal Knowledge and Skills Scale. (PPK), and Parents'

Perceptions of Personal Time and Energy scale. (PPT).

The three compacts (Cypress and Mulberry Elementary within Cedar School

District and the compact for the Green Meadows district) had varied scales and ranges.

The scores from Cypress had a range from 8 to 44 ($M = 36.83$, $SD = 2.04$), while

Mulberry had a range from 14 to 72 ($M = 51.56$, $SD = 9.20$). The Parental Engagement

Practices Scale for Brook Meadows School District had a range from 61 to 96 ($M =$

91.70, *SD* = 5.12). Due to the varied ranges and scales for the three versions of the parental involvement scale, I standardized the scores on all three measures by converting them to Z scores within one Parental Engagement Practices (PEP) Scale. Table 4 displays the Pearson bivariate correlations and descriptive statistics for each variable in relation to the Z scores for the PEP measure.

**Missing Data.** I used the *SPSS Missing Value Analysis* feature to analyze missing data. Literature suggests that missing data can create complications during data analysis, as well as biases within the data (Acock, 2005; Peugh & Enders, 2004). Upon examination of all of the potential values, 2.08% of the overall values were missing. Further analysis of these data revealed that 69.16% of the items consisted of missing data, while 57.32% of the 157 cases had at least one missing value. There are a number of ways in which researchers account for missing data (Acock, 2005; Peguh & Enders, 2004; Schafer & Graham, 2002). However, some measures, such as listwise and pairwise deletion, can bias statistical parameters and increase the likelihood of Type II errors (Acock, 2005).

Maximum Likelihood (ML) is a well-supported approach that accounts for missing data within research (Acock, 2005; Allison, 2012; Dempster, Laird, & Rubin, 1977; Schafer & Graham, 2002). Within the maximum likelihood approach, a likelihood function algorithm is used to develop estimates of missing data. The resulting procedure generates a single dataset with values available for all data within the dataset, including estimates for the missing data. Compared to alternate approaches for missing data (such as Multiple Imputation), some researchers argue that Maximum Likelihood is preferred over Multiple Imputation for several reasons: (a) ML results in less sampling variance

than MI, (b) ML produces the same results (i.e., parameter estimates, test statistics, standard errors) for a given set of data regardless of how often it is used, (c) there are fewer decisions on behalf of the researcher that can impact the resulting datasets (e.g., method of data augmentation, number of data sets to produce, number of iterations between datasets).

Expectation-Maximization (EM) is a maximum likelihood approach that uses the aforementioned algorithm to generate a single imputed dataset using all of the observed values to generate the estimates. I used the *SPSS Missing Value Analysis* module to run the EM procedure on the available data.

The Maximum Likelihood approach is based on the assumption that the data are Missing at Random (MAR) or Missing Completely At Random (MCAR). To explore these assumptions, I conducted Little's MCAR test. An analysis of the independent variables indicated that the data were missing at random, as the results were non-significant $X^2$(1032, n= 157)= 872.59, p = 1.00. A visual analysis of the missing value patterns and frequencies using *SPSS Missing Analysis* suggested that the missing values lacked monotonicity (patterns of missing values), which further supported the conclusion that the missing data was Missing at Random. Tables 4 and 5 display the correlation matrix and descriptive statistics before and after the EM procedure.

**Statistical Assumptions.** I examined the statistical assumptions for multiple regression (the primary statistical analysis) for this study. For example, I used the correlation matrix to examine multicollinearity (see Table 5). Additionally, I examined outliers on the dependent and independent variables using the standardized residual plots

Table 4. Pearson bivariate correlations and descriptive statistics (prior to imputation)

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | M | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Role Activity Beliefs (RAB) | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | 53.22 | 6.40 |
| 2. Valence toward School (VAS) | .13 | 1.00 | | | | | | | | 29.50 | 7.57 |
| 3. Self-Efficacy for Helping Child Succeed in School (PSE) | .26** | .24** | 1.00 | | | | | | | 35.41 | 5.12 |
| 4. Perceptions of Personal Knowledge and Skills (PPK) | .40** | .41** | .34** | 1.00 | | | | | | 48.31 | 4.63 |
| 5. Perceptions of Personal Time and Energy (PPT) | .42** | .21** | .23** | .58** | 1.00 | | | | | 31.54 | 3.67 |
| 6. Perceptions of General Invitations for Involvement from School (PGI) | .42** | .51** | .29** | .57** | .48** | 1.00 | | | | 31.39 | 4.17 |
| 7. Perceptions of Specific Invitations for Involvement from Teacher (PST) | .22** | .09 | -.12 | .25* | .28* | .29** | 1.00 | | | 22.62 | 8.83 |
| 8. Perceptions of Specific Invitations for Involvement from Child (PSC) | .00 | .05 | -.22** | .15 | .20* | .16* | .52** | 1.00 | | 22.39 | 6.83 |
| 9. PEP Z Scores | .27** | .11 | .02 | .30** | .36** | .31** | .40** | .25** | 1.00 | -.03 | 1.02 |

N=157, p<.05*, p<.01**.

Table 5. Pearson bivariate correlations and descriptive statistics (after maximum likelihood estimation)

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | M | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Role Activity Beliefs (RAB) | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | 53.22 | 6.40 |
| 2. Valence toward School (VAS) | .14 | 1.00 | | | | | | | | 29.70 | 7.36 |
| 3. Self-Efficacy for Helping Child Succeed in School (PSE) | .27** | .20* | 1.00 | | | | | | | 35.59 | 4.95 |
| 4. Perceptions of Personal Knowledge and Skills (PPK) | .40** | .37** | .30** | 1.00 | | | | | | 48.31 | 4.63 |
| 5. Perceptions of Personal Time and Energy (PPT) | .42** | .21** | .23** | .57** | 1.00 | | | | | 31.54 | 3.65 |
| 6. Perceptions of General Invitations for Involvement from School (PGI) | .39** | .48** | .26** | .59** | .49** | 1.00 | | | | 31.49 | 4.08 |
| 7. Perceptions of Specific Invitations for Involvement from Teacher (PST) | .22** | .11 | -.12 | .24** | .28** | .31** | 1.00 | | | 22.78 | 8.74 |
| 8. Perceptions of Specific Invitations for Involvement from Child (PSC) | .00 | .07 | -.21** | .13 | .21** | .17* | .53** | 1.00 | | 22.56 | 6.76 |
| 9. Z score: Z scores for PEP | .28** | .12 | .03 | .31** | .36** | .31** | .41** | .27** | 1.00 | .00 | 1.02 |

N=157, p<.05*, p<.01**.

of the dependent variables. The scores were between 3.3 and -3.3, which were within the expected range. Visual analyses of the Normal Q-Q plot, boxplots, and histogram suggested that the data were generally normally distributed. However, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test suggested violations of normality. Upon examining the skewness and kurtosis of the data, a majority of the variables had a slight negative skew (with a range from -2.34 to .84) and a majority of the variables had instances of kurtosis (-.96 to .99). However, upon comparison of the 5% trimmed mean and the overall means, the similarity of the means suggested that the outliers were not significantly different from the rest of the distribution. As such, they were unlikely to influence the data in a significant capacity. As a result, I left the data unaltered for the analyses.

**Research Question 1**

Upon collection of the school-parent compacts from each participating school, I coded the practices defined in the "parent" section of the compact using a theoretical thematic analysis of the school-parent compact using Epstein's six typologies of parental engagement (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Epstein, 1995). The percentage of items within each was the unit of analysis for this question. I examined the proportion of practices that fell under the six categories and compared them across school districts (see Table 6).

Chi square tests of independence (with Yates Continuity Correction) for each parental engagement category revealed no significant associations between school districts for each category. In the Parenting category, $X^2$ (1, n = 30) = 1.54, p=.22, phi = -.30. In the Communication category, $X^2$ (1, n = 30) = .45, p=.50, phi = .19. In the Volunteering category, $X^2$ (1, n = 30) = .01, p=.95, phi = .20. In the Learning at Home

Table 6. Parental Engagement Practices by District (in Percentages)

| Category | Cedar | Green Meadows |
|---|---|---|
| Parenting | 21.4 | 50 |
| Communicating | 42.9 | 31.3 |
| Volunteering | 7.1 | 0 |
| Learning at Home | 7.1 | 18.8 |
| Decision Making | 21.4 | 0 |
| Collaborating with the Community | 0 | 0 |

Note: $N_{Cedar} = 14$, $N_{Green} = 16$

category, $X^2$ (1, n = 30) = .16, p=.69, phi = -.17. In the Decision Making category, $X^2$ (1, n = 30) = 1.80, p=.18, phi = .36. In the Collaborating with the Community category, I could not conduct the chi-square analysis take place because both districts possessed 0% of the items.

As displayed in Table 6, the Cedar School District compacts emphasized practices in the Communication category (42.9%) more than any other category measured. Categories that were the least represented within Cedar's compact were in the Volunteering (7.1%), Learning at Home (7.1%), and Collaborating with the Community (0%). Within Green Meadows, Parenting was emphasized more than the other categories (50%), which was followed by Communicating (31.3%). Volunteering, Decision Making, and Collaborating with the Community practices were not identified within the compact (0%).

**Research Question 2**

Means and standard deviations for each of the engagement practices within the Parental Engagement Practices Scale can be found in Tables 7 and 8 for Cedar and Green Meadows School Districts, respectively. Within Cedar School District, some of the items had a 4-point Likert scale, while other items had a 6-point Likert scale. Within Cedar

School District, some of the items with the highest ratings were "I made sure that my child followed the district's uniform policy" ($M = 5.78$, $SD = .61$) and "I notified the school of any changes in address or telephone information" ($M = 3.92$, $SD = .26$). Among the items with the lowest participation were "I volunteered in my child's classroom" ($M = 2.57$, $SD = 1.40$) and "I registered my contact information for notification purposes." ($M = 2.05$, $SD = 1.29$).

Within Green Meadows, the items with the highest means were "I did everything I could to make sure that my child was sent to school each morning feeling loved" ($M = 5.98$, $SD = .13$), "I made sure that my child was on time for school." ($M = 5.98$, $SD = .16$) and "I made sure my child attended school regularly." ($M = 5.98$, $SD = .20$). The practice with the lowest participation rating was "I communicated with my child's teacher" ($M = 4.88$, $SD = 1.56$).

Table 7. Means (and Standard Deviations) of Parental Engagement Practices in Cedar School District

| Practice | $M$ (SD) | N |
|---|---|---|
| I kept track of my child's school attendance. [a] | 5.21 (1.51) | 34 |
| I made sure that my child's homework was completed. [a] | 5.70 (.68) | 34 |
| I monitored the amount of television my child watched. [a] | 5.30 (1.36) | 34 |
| I volunteered in my child's classroom. [a] | 2.57 (1.40) | 34 |
| I participated in decisions related to my child's education. [a] | 4.93 (1.33) | 34 |
| I encouraged my child to spend out-of-school time in positive and healthy ways. [a] | 5.38 (1.30) | 34 |
| I read school and district notices received through my child or in the mail and responded to them. [b] | 3.68 (.68) | 34 |
| I served on policy advisory groups (for example, serving on the School Improvement Team, Title 1 Policy Advisory Committee, District-wide Policy Advisory Council, State's Committee of Practitioners, School Support Team). [b] | 2.06 (1.15) | 34 |
| I made sure that my child followed the district's uniform policy.* [a] | 5.78 (.61) | 28 |
| I kept track of my child's progress using Zangle Parent Connect.* [a] | 2.66 (1.92) | 28 |
| I attended School Board Meetings. * [b] | 2.19(.99) | 28 |
| I attended School Wide events.* [b] | 2.68 (1.02) | 28 |
| I notified the school of any changes in address or telephone information.* [b] | 3.92 (.26) | 28 |
| I registered my contact information for notification purposes.* [b] | 2.05 (1.29) | 28 |

*This item was only in the school-parent compact for Mulberry Elementary.

[a] This item used a Likert scale from 1 to 6 (1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Once a month, 4 = Once a week, 5 = A few Times a week, 6 = Everyday)

[b] This item uses a Likert scale from 1 to 4 (1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Every Time)

Table 8. Means (and Standard Deviations) of Parental Engagement Practices in Green Meadows School District

| Practice | $M$ (SD) | N |
|---|---|---|
| I did everything I could to make my child's education my number one priority. [a] | 5.91 (.36) | 123 |
| I made sure that my child attended school regularly. [a] | 5.98 (.20) | 123 |
| I made sure that my child was on time for school. [a] | 5.98 (.16) | 123 |
| I did everything I could to make sure that my child arrived at school well-fed. [a] | 5.89 (.44) | 123 |
| I did everything I could to make sure that my child arrived at school well-rested. [a] | 5.96 (.20) | 123 |
| I did everything I could to make sure that my child was sent to school each morning feeling loved. [a] | 5.98 (.13) | 123 |
| I set a specific time for my student to do homework. [a] | 5.73 (.95) | 123 |
| I set up a quiet place for my child to do homework. [a] | 5.64 (1.04) | 123 |
| I checked my child's homework. [a] | 5.84 (.57) | 123 |
| I read the information my child brought home from school. [a] | 5.85 (.47) | 123 |
| I knew what my child was learning at school. [a] | 5.87 (.38) | 123 |
| I communicated with my child's school. [a] | 4.96 (1.50) | 123 |
| I communicated with my child's teacher. [a] | 4.88 (1.56) | 123 |
| I encouraged my child to follow all of the school rules. [a] | 5.93 (.40) | 123 |
| I followed up with any signs of my child's misconduct. [a] | 5.50 (1.30) | 123 |
| I supported the discipline plan used at my child's school. [a] | 5.81 (.76) | 123 |

[a] This item used a Likert scale from 1 to 6 (1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Once a month, 4 = Once a week, 5 = A few Times a week, 6 = Everyday)

**Research Question 3**

The open-ended question "Helping Children in School" examined parent

definitions of parental engagement. Using a theoretical thematic analysis, I separated and

coded the responses for each participant using Epstein's six typologies of parental

involvement (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Epstein, 1995). Figure 6 displays sample parent

responses to the open-ended question within each parental engagement category.

Figure 6. Sample Parent Definitions of Engagement by Epstein's Involvement Category

| Epstein's Parental Involvement Category | Sample Responses |
| --- | --- |
| Parenting | "By having my child follow a daily routine" "Reward jobs well done" "I help my daughter by making sure she goes to bed early to get enough rest" |
| Communicating | "I have daily meetings with each teacher" "I also inform the teacher of learning challenges that I see" |
| Volunteering | "I volunteer and assist as much as I can in the school" |
| Learning at Home | "We play board games" "She does a lot on the computer with educational games (sprout, nick jr.)" "Helping with homework" "We also play school at home where she is the teacher sometimes" "We draw and recognize shapes, work on pronunciation in a way that [my child] would enjoy" |
| Decision Making | "I attend parent meetings" |
| Collaborating with the Community | "Take my child to local libraries for free programs" "Craft shows" |

Of the 157 participants, 44% participants provided at least one response (the remaining

56% of participants did not provide a response to the question). I conducted an

independent-samples t-test to compare the mean number of responses to the question by school district. There was no significant difference in mean responses for Cedar School District (*M*= 1.44, *SD*=1.93) and Green Meadows District (*M*=1.49, *SD*=2.27; t (155) = -.11, p = .84, two-tailed). The mean number of responses per participant was 1.48 (*SD* = 2.19), which resulted in 232 separate items for analysis.

As shown in Table 9, a majority of parent definitions (42.2%) were within the Parenting category, followed by Learning at Home (38.8%). There were limited responses related to Communication (9.1%), Volunteering (5.6% percent), and Collaborating with the Community (4.3%). There were 2 responses that were related to Decision-making (0.8%). Table 9 compares the percentages of the raw number of parent definitions in relation to the school district definitions of engagement within the compact.

Table 9. Parent and Compact Definitions of Engagement by Percentage

| Parental Involvement Category | Parent Definitions | Cedar | Green Meadows |
|---|---|---|---|
| Parenting | 42.2 | 21.4 | 50 |
| Communicating | 9.1 | 42.9 | 31.3 |
| Volunteering | 4.7 | 7.1 | 0 |
| Learning at Home | 38.8 | 7.1 | 18.8 |
| Decision Making | 0.8 | 14.3 | 0 |
| Collaborating with the Community | 4.3 | 0 | 0 |

**Research Question 4**

Using a hierarchical multiple regression, I included the sum totals of the eight variables described in the model within a single regression as predictor variables to assess their association with parent reports of parental engagement practices (the outcome variable). A hierarchical regression allows for the variables to be entered into the regression analysis in a particular order (or block) based on previous theoretical

explanations (see Table 10). I examined the change in the amount of variance that is explained in order to understand the effects of the groups of variables.

I entered demographic variables into Block 1 as the control variables for the analysis. Specifically, socioeconomic status (as measured by income and educational level), school district, child's grade in school, parent ethnicity, and parent gender were entered into Block 1. I created dummy codes for each control variable in Block 1. Block 2 consisted of the variables that explain personal motivators (Role Activity Beliefs, Valence Toward School, Parental Efficacy for Helping the Child Succeed in School Scale). Block 3 consisted of invitations for involvement (Parental Perceptions of General Invitations for Involvement from the School, Parents' Perceptions of Specific Invitations for Involvement from the Teacher, Parents' Perceptions of Specific Invitations for Involvement from the Child Scale). Block 4 consisted of life context variables (Parents' Perceptions of Personal Knowledge and Skills scale, Parents' Perceptions of Personal Time and Energy scale). The outcome variable consisted of a standardized measure of the total items in the Parental Involvement Scale (combining the two districts).

The control variables accounted from 32% of the variance in Parental Involvement Practices. After the entry of RAB, VAS, and PSE, at Block 2 the total variance explained by the model was 35%, $F$ (32, 124) = 2.04, p < .05. The personal motivators explained an additional 3% of the variance, after controlling for the demographic characteristics, $R^2$ change = .03, F change (3, 124) = 1.64, p > .05, Cohen's $f^2$ = .05.

Table 10. Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Parental Engagement

| Predictor | B | SE B | R | $R^2$ | $\Delta R^2$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Step 1 | | | .55 | .32 | .30* |
| Control Variables [a] | 1.03 | .73 | | | |
| Step 2 | | | .59 | .35 | .03 |
| Role Activity Beliefs | .02 | .01 | | | |
| Valence toward School | .01 | .01 | | | |
| Parental Self-Efficacy | -.02 | .02 | | | |
| Step 3 | | | .67 | .45 | .11* |
| Perceptions of General Invitations for Involvement from School | .04 | .02 | | | |
| Perceptions of General Invitations for Involvement from Teacher | .03* | .01 | | | |
| Perceptions of General Invitations for Involvement from Child | .02 | .01 | | | |
| Step 4 | | | .70 | .49 | .01* |
| Perceptions of Personal Knowledge and Skills | .04 | .02 | | | |
| Perceptions of Personal Time and Energy | .04* | .03 | | | |

[a] Control variables included socioeconomic status (as measured by income and educational level), school district, child's grade in school, parent ethnicity, and parent gender.
*p < .05

The total variance explained by perceptions of invitations to involvement (PGI, PST, PSC) by the model was 45%, $F (35, 121) = 2.88$, $p < .05$. The measures in Block 3 explained an additional 11% of the variance after controlling for Block 1 and 2, $R^2$ change $= .11$, F change $(3, 121) = 8.08$, $p < .05$, Cohen's $f^2 = .18$.

Life context variables explained 49% of the variance in the regression model, $F (37, 119) = 3.13$, $p < .05$. The measures in Block 4 explained an additional 4% of the variance, after controlling aforementioned variables, $R^2$ change $= .04$, F change $(2, 119) = 4.57$, $p < .05$, Cohen's $f^2 = .08$.

**Research Question 5**

Using a phenomenological approach, I used thick description and interpretive analysis to examine how parents make meaning of their "lived experience" with the parental engagement and home-school partnerships (Smith & Osborn, 2007; Starks & Trinidad, 2007). I identified themes related to their previous experiences with schooling, their parents' varied parental engagement practices, as well as the manner in which their own engagement practices as a result of the analysis (see Figure 7). These themes will be described in detail below.

*Past Experiences with School*

*Active participant.* Eight of the twelve participants reported that they were actively engaged in school. This included expressed interest in school, involvement in extracurricular activities, and an interest in learning the academic content. According to Angela, she was active in many organizations and extra-curricular activities at school:

…not only I did my, you know, I had school work to do, I also had extracurricular activity to do. And I also worked a new little different job, I had to work like three jobs when I was in school. And, like I said, track and field, ROTC, stage, crafts, I was in a number of things. So it was tirin' to me. I tried to keep up with everything. Cause I wanted my name to be [in] lights in the yearbook.

In addition to extra-curricular activities, some participants viewed themselves as leaders within their schools. For example, Alana said "I was in a lotta groups and stuff…the National Honors Society. What else did I do? I was a leader like that. Just like an overall leader. Like, you know, when the class would be disruptive, [I would] be like, 'Hey, stop!'" In this example, Alana described herself as someone who was active in organizations and respected by her peers. When she believed that her peers were engaged in inappropriate behaviors, she would reprimand her peers, and believed that her peers would respond accordingly.

Participants also expressed their participation via their interest in learning the curricula at the school. As Danielle noted:

"I liked to learn new things. I mean, it was interesting to learn new things. Every time I came home I was tellin' about what I learned in school that day. Be it that it was in science or social studies or whatever the case may had'a been, I was very eager to…I learned some new information."

This participant's comment highlighted her interest in various content areas, as well as a desire to share the information with her family when she returned home from school.

Some participants reported aspects of the school environment and classroom activities that they enjoyed. For example, Jeanette reported an interest in classroom

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discussions, recalling, "I was always one to raise my hand and put input out and, you know, got some positive reinforcement from [it]. If people value your opinion you're more likely to give it." Mary praised the instructors in some of her courses, stating that she enjoyed English courses because "…I had some good teachers for those classes." These factors contributed to positive school experiences for these participants, causing them to enjoy their schooling.

*Disinterest.* Five of the twelve participants expressed disinterest or indifference toward school over the course of their schooling. Participants cited disinterest in the academic content most often, attributing it to poor instruction. As Angela noted,

"…it's kinda hard to learn the work when it's not anything…if it's not really excitin' to someone, they really aren't going to remember. They really…the first thing that'd come to their mind was, 'I just want to go to sleep' or 'I'm just ready to go out this class.' So I felt like the teacher shoulda made it more interestin' or somethin'. Visual aids, something!"

According to the participants, the lack of engagement or interest in the course content was due to limited efforts to engage the students with varied forms of instructions, aids, or enthusiasm. Participants also noted that perceived teacher apathy contributed to their disinterest in school. For example, when asked why she was often bored at school, Yvette explained:

I feel when I was in school, the teachers didn't put any effort into teaching. They were just there to get a paycheck. If I was in school, if I had a question…if you just did your homework and showed up, you passed.

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Comments such as these suggested disinterest in school that was related to teacher indifference. Yvette recalled instances in which she felt that the teachers were not invested in her education (or that of her peers); in turn, she became indifferent as well.

*Social concerns.* In addition to issues with a lack of interest in academic content, participants also reported themes related to bullying and struggles with finding a social niche while in school. Four out of twelve participants reported experiences with bullying amongst peers while they were students. As Danielle noted,

…the thing that I disliked about school was the kids' bullyin'. I got bullied a lot. So, just getting bullied, it made you not want to go to school, period. And then, also, it took away that eagerness to learn. So it's like, "Well, if I gotta go to school and deal with this, what's the purpose of me doing X, Y, and Z?

Other participants noted problems with finding a niche, or a social network of peers, while they were in school. Jeannette described her elementary school experience as troublesome as she tried to find a peer group that she could connect with. She explained, "In my early education, I can remember really struggling to find my social niche and be able to say, 'These are my friends.' You know, I didn't have any friends." As a result of negative peer interactions, these participants encountered struggles while they attended school.

### Parents' Previous Engagement

When asked about ways in which their parents supported their education, the participants reported a number of practices.

*Financial support and employment.* Although many of the participants did not report financial support or employment as direct ways in which their parents supported

their education, a majority of the participants reported that at least one parent was employed while they were in school. As opposed to viewing their employment as an asset or benefit over the course of their schooling, many participants reported that their parent's employment served as an impediment to their participation. While discussing her mother's perceived lack of engagement, Linda explained "…my mom, like I said, was a single parent. So she had to do it all herself. So no, because of the fact that she was more working as opposed to being home with us." Angela supported this viewpoint as well, explaining that her father worked at a automotive plant. As a result, she explained, "…the only time I saw my dad was from the time, you know, he got off of work until it's time for him to go back to work." Such comments highlighted the effects of time constraints imposed by work schedules that kept these parents from participating in their education from their perspective.

While parent employment was generally viewed as something that served as a barrier to engagement, two of the twelve participants viewed their parents' employment as a means of support. Jeanette explained that "…both [of my parents] encouraged me, especially with the financial portion of bein' in a private school." By providing financial support for private school, Jeanette believed that her parents demonstrated interest and support of her educational experiences. Another participant identified her parent's financial support as a means of providing supplemental educational services that supported her learning. As Alana recalled, "I remember I needed a tutor, she paid for that." Through these examples, their parents' ability to provide resources created an educational environment that facilitated their growth and development. Through the use of financial resources, these parents perceived these practices as forms of encouragement,

Figure 7. Matrix of Themes

| Name | Michelle | Angela | Christine | Elaine | Linda | Alana | Mary | Danielle | Jeanette | Krystal | Tatiana | Yvette |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| PEP Ranking | Low | High | Med | Low | Low | Med | High | High | Med | High | Low | High |
| **Past Experiences with School** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Active Participant | | x | | | x | x | x | x | x | | | x |
| Disinterest | x | x | | | x | | | | | | x | x |
| Social Concerns | | | x | x | x | x | | x | x | | | x |
| **Parents' Previous Engagement** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Financial Support | | | | | | x | | | x | | | |
| Employment as a Barrier | | x | | | x | x | | | x | | | |
| Creating Opportunities to Learn | | | | x | | | | x | x | | | |
| Encouraging Words | | | x | | | | | | x | | | x |
| Homework Support | | x | | | | x | | x | x | | x | |
| Expressed Expectations | | | x | x | | x | | x | x | x | x | |
| Presence at School | | x | x | | | | | | | | | |
| Lack of Involvement | x | | x | | | x | x | x | x | x | | x |

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Figure 7 (cont'd)

| Name | Michelle | Angela | Christine | Elaine | Linda | Alana | Mary | Danielle | Jeanette | Krystal | Tatiana | Yvette |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| PEP Ranking | Low | High | Med | Low | Low | Med | High | High | Med | High | Low | High |
| **Self-Reported Engagement** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Communication with Teachers | x | x | x | x | x | x | | | x | | x | x |
| Presence at School | | x | x | | | | x | | x | | | |
| Reading School-based Communication | | | | x | | | | x | x | x | x | |
| Creating Opportunities to Learn | x | x | | | | | | x | x | | | |
| Homework Support | | | | | | | | x | | | x | |

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as they created an environment in which learning was supported and valued.

*Creating opportunities to learn.* Interview participants described experiences during which their parents created learning experiences beyond the classroom environment to support their education. These experiences varied, from placement in Headstart services, creating activities to promote vocabulary skills, and the development of materials related to content that was not discussed at schools. For example, Elaine described her mother's insistence that they learn about Black History despite the lack of instruction within her school's curriculum:

> She'd give us our certain set of work to do…[a] packet of 'this is what I'm expecting of you.' And it'd never be reading, writing, and arithmetic. It's mainly history. She's a history buff. History, black history. So [she would say] … 'this is what they're <u>not</u> teaching you. This what you're gonna learn here.'

Within this quote, Elaine explained that her mother wanted to make sure that she learned about material that was not discussed at school; in the absence of the instruction at school, her mother developed resources that her child could use to learn about content that was missing from her traditional schooling – in this case, Black History.

Jeanette discussed ways that her father engaged in practices that supported the classroom curriculum. As she discussed the means in which her father supported her education, Jeanette said,

> …he would open the dictionary and then he'd give me a word that he knew I didn't know…and then [he would say], 'Just try to guess what it means.' Or, [he would say] 'I'm going to put it in a sentence. What do you think it means?'

By using these strategies, Jeanette's father supported her language arts skills in a number of areas (i.e., vocabulary knowledge, use of context clues within sentences to facilitate understanding). These strategies could have reinforced strategies that she learned at school, or provided her with additional support to increase her knowledge and awareness of vocabulary and sentence structure. Each of these practices provided learning opportunities (whether structured or unstructured) enabled learning to take place outside of the classroom setting.

*Encouraging words.* Participants discussed their parents' use of words of encouragement as ways in which they supported their educational experiences. This included offers of congratulations for a job well done on a school-related task, advice related to a school-related situation, or encouragement to go to college. For example, Jeanette noted that her mother "…would always be proud of me and tell me to keep up the good work and stuff, so that helped out." These seemingly small words of encouragement were commonly identified by participants as means of support while they were in school.

Another participant, Christine, discussed advice that her mother provided as she dealt with bullying. Christine dealt with bullying (specifically, name-calling and physical aggression) at the hands of male and female peers. Christine recalled having a conversation with her mother about the incidents, saying, "Mom, I hear you. I've always heard you when you said 'Ignore 'em.'" In this instance, Christine's mother offered support in the form of advice that was meant to improve Christine's interactions with her peers. While some participants discussed specific strategies and approaches to handle

situations, some participants reported that their parents would provide them with minimal, but impactful, words of encouragement.

*Homework support.* Five of the twelve participants mentioned homework support as a way in which their parents demonstrated their participation in schooling. For example, Danielle recalled the manner in which her stepfather supported a number of content areas, stating, "He made sure, you know, my handwriting was up to par. He helped me with my math and my reading." Angela's comments coincided with such statements, as she recalled, "…she tried to help me, you know, my math, she tried to help me with my readin', and English, and everything. But she also tried to, you know, do visual aids for me, too." According to the participants, their parents supported their homework completion by directly assisting them as they worked. In some instances, their parents created materials that would support their child's learning and homework completion.

Although a majority of the parents discussed homework support as a way in which their parents supported their education, two of the participants explained that their parents did not help with homework. In some instances, participants explained that they did not feel that they needed assistance. For example, Christine recalled, "I didn't really need help with the homework. I knew how to do it." Tatiana, however, identified a lack of content area knowledge as an explanation for their lack of homework support., As she recalled her parents' efforts, Tatiana stated:

> They definitely promoted homework. Doin' homework, doin' extra, goin' above
>
> and beyond. She tried to help as much- my mom and dad tried to help as much [as

they could]– but sometimes they don't understand it either, so they did what they could do, though.

This quote highlights the impact of parent knowledge and skills in relation to homework support. However, this quote also addressed alternate means of homework support that occurred within their household. According to Tatiana, her parents supported and valued the benefits of homework, despite occasions in which they did not understand the content themselves. By encouraging their child to complete homework and assisting their child when they could, Christine's parents were able to send a message about the importance of homework regardless of their content knowledge. These efforts may have played a role in developing a culture that values extended learning outside of the classroom environment.

*Expressed expectations.* The provision of expectations regarding educational performance was a common theme within the interviews. Seven out of the twelve participants reported that their parent(s) relayed a message that educational performance was valued within the home. The manner in which these ideals were expressed varied amongst the participants. Unwritten rules, in which there were consequences for undesired educational performance, were present within the participant responses. For example, Elaine noted, "I didn't get no help when it comes to school. I got in trouble if I didn't produce." According to this Elaine, despite the absence of other practices that may have supported her educational experience, she knew that a poor academic performance would lead to an undesired consequence. As such, the importance of educational success was reinforced through consequences that came about due to unmet expectations.

Participants also explained that parents would communicate their expectations about academic performance by providing them with a structured schedule that allowed for homework completion and school attendance. In support of this theme, Danielle discussed the manner in which her step-grandfather structured her day:

> My step-grandfather he was pretty much military. And just the structure that I had when I was livin' with him and my grandmother…it was like down at 9:00, up at 5:00, work out. And then, when I got home from school, study for about an hour or two.

By providing the participant with a predetermined schedule for the day that included time for schoolwork, this practice could reinforce the notion that schooling is important, while teaching them self-regulation skills via adherence to a schedule and routine.

In some instances, positive reinforcement was incorporated with expectations regarding a positive performance in school. Danielle recalled occasions in which her mother told her, "'Bring me a good report card…we're gonna go get you those shoes you wanted and an outfit.'" The positive reinforcement in conjunction with the encouragement to bring a report card with "good" grades appeared to encourage Danielle to consistently perform well in school. At the same time, her mother explained the requirements that should be met in order to receive a reward (in this case, clothing) in her household. By associating rewards with a positive performance in school, Danielle's mother created a home environment that highlighted the importance of schooling in order to access desired items or privileges.

*Presence at school.* Two of the twelve participants noted that their parents were a presence at the school, going to the school's campus for a variety of purposes. One participant described her mother as someone who came to the school when a conflict or issues occurred with her child. Specifically, Angela noted "Anytime something happened, she was at the school." This suggests that her mother's presence was contingent upon negative incidents, as opposed to school-based invitations to events or celebrations of her child's accomplishments. Rather, her mother's presence in school appeared to be more indicative of the role of a disciplinarian, as she was called to the school to discipline her child or problem solve with school staff when Angela was not meeting the school's expectations.

Christine noted that her mother attended parent-teacher conferences, which allowed for her to learn about her behavior in school. Christine explained:

> So my mother, you know, during parent-teacher conferences, when I would bring home 3's in citizenship on my card, she didn't understand what I meant when I would tell her, 'it's all because of this person.' She never understood.

Within this quotation, Christine explained that her mother attended parent-teacher conferences, which (in addition to report cards that were sent home) allowed her to monitor the behavioral progress of her child. This gave Christine the opportunity to discuss peer interactions with her mother, as she had to explain why she received poor marks in her class. As such, her mother's presence created parent-child interactions that encouraged discussion of events at school, while offering Christine an opportunity to explain her perspective. It should be noted, however, that Christine also brought her report card home to her mother. This appeared to elicit similar conversations with her

mother, regardless of her mother's attendance at the parent-teacher conferences. While the parent-teacher conferences helped facilitate conversations with Angela, the report card served as the primary facilitator of these conversations.

*Lack of engagement.* Despite the aforementioned practices that were described by many of the participants, eight of the twelve participants noted that their parents did not participate in their educational experience. Participants provided a number of explanations for their parents' lack of engagement. Some participants pointed to a lack of general parental involvement in their lives as a whole. For example, Christine explained that her father "…hadn't been in our lives since I was like two or three years old." Alana also noted, "my father, he was never around, so…" This lack of involvement was not isolated to engagement in schooling, but was indicative of their father's absence in all facets of life.

Perspectives about the parental role in education played a role in limited engagement as well. As Mary noted, "…we were on our own growin' up. Like if you learn it, you do; if you don't you don't." This perspective highlights the notion that her parent's role in her education was distant, if not absent, from Mary's perspective. Mary thought that the children in her family were "on [their] own," suggesting that Mary believed that her parents placed the responsibility of learning on their shoulders: if the children want to learn the information, it is their responsibility to do so.

Jeannette explained the lack of parent participation in terms of her mother's limited educational experiences:

"My mom didn't go far in school and something that's…she doesn't like that kinda stuff. She doesn't, you know, she's not the one to help you with your

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homework. Dad was always the one to do that kinda stuff because she was kind of unsure of her own self, so…"

Within this quotation, Jeanette addresses a number of potential contributors to her mother's lack of engagement. For example, Jeanette associated her mother's educational level with and discomfort with school-based content as reasons why her mother was not as engaged as her father. According to Jeanette, these factors contributed to her uncertainty, which limited her role in her child's education. Yvette relayed a similar experience with her parents. When asked about her parents' role in her education, she replied that they did not participate, and went on to say, "If I asked 'em a question with my homework, I would get, 'I don't know the answer. Go call your grandparents.'" In each of these instances, a lack of familiarity with the content contributed to a limited desire to engage in their child's education.

It should also be noted that in these instances, "help" or "support" was related to support with academic content. Both Jeanette and Yvette appeared to use homework support as a primary indicator of parental engagement. Although the participants responded to an open-ended question about ways in which their parents were engaged in their education, their response was predicated by their involvement in homework support. As a result, a lack of engagement was attributed to disinterest or lack of engagement in specific practices (or set of practices), as opposed to an acknowledgement of alternate parental engagement practices.

***Self-reported Engagement***

During the interview, I asked participants about ways that they worked with their child's school to support their child's education. The themes that were generated within this portion of the interview are explained below.

*Communication with teachers.* Direct communication with their child's teacher was a common theme in the interviews. 9 out of 12 participants reported communication regarding their child's progress in school (academically and behaviorally). For example, Angela described the intent of her communication, explaining, "I like to talk to the, all his teachers, instructors, to find out what's goin' on, whether he's learnin' anything, whatever. I ask them could they give me some type of progress report 'cause I can know what his weaknesses [are], what is strongest." The participants reported consistent communication with their child's teacher, with some communication as frequent as every weekday. Frequency did not appear to be related to the perceived importance of the communication, however. Regardless of the frequency, the participants shared a perspective regarding the benefits of parent-teacher communication. Among those who reported the practice, parent-teacher communication was viewed as a practice that led to positive academic and behavioral outcomes. For example, Alana commented, "…at [Mulberry Elementary] he had a good teacher, and I kinda worked with her. And just, you know, kept in contact with her. So he never really fell off."

In some cases, the participants would communicate with their child's teacher in order to get suggestions about practices they can implement at home. During Michelle's interview, she discussed some of the things that she talked about with her child's teacher. Michelle explained, "I talk to her every day or either Tuesday or Thursday out of the week. You know, she keep me updated on her.  Givin' me tips on, you know, how to have

[my child] not care about what people think about her so much." While Michelle received general updates on her child's progress in school, Michelle collaborated with the teacher on character education instructional strategies in order to develop her child's self esteem and ability to interact with peers. Angela, on the other had, spoke to the teacher about her child's progress in order to identify areas that she could support with supplemental instruction in the home environment. When Angela talked to her child's teacher, she wanted to know "…what I need to be workin' on more than other [topics]. I'm not sayin' because he's strong on that I'm not gonna work on it, but I want to work on what he's weak on more." In this instance, teacher communication assisted Angela by providing information that could be used to tailor the instruction she provided within the home, in order to support her child's areas of growth.

Although a majority of the participants reported oral communication as a means of contacting their child's teacher, some teachers use alternate means of communication. For example, Elaine described a "tracker," which is sent home by way of the child every day. The tracker contains notes regarding the child's progress in school as well as any concerns or accomplishments that the teacher observed that day. Elaine reported that she signed the tracker every day, which "…let the teacher know that I know what [my child] did. I know what [the teacher was] talking about if there is something special to be talked about." By signing the tracker regularly, Elaine communicated with her child's teacher. This served as a means of informing Elaine about her child's performance, as well as any conversations she may want to have with her child about the school day.

Another parent used notes in order to schedule meetings with the teacher. These meetings would allow for more in depth discussions about her child's progress. Christine

expressed surprise related to one teacher's response to this practice, noting, "…[this] was the one teacher that got offended when I wrote a note to him requesting to speak with him…" While this practice was common for Christine to communicate interest in a future meeting, this particular teacher did not respond in a manner that she as used to, suggesting previous instances of compliance with her request. While this approach did not lead to a desired outcome in this situation, Christine's response the teacher's offense suggested this communication was a successful strategy in the past.

*Presence at school.* Some participants described their presence at school as a practice that supported their child's education. Their presence varied in terms of intent, with some coming to structured events (i.e., parent teacher conferences), while others maintained their presence through unstructured visits. In some cases, the parent perceived their presence as required in order to find out about the child's progress. As Jeanette explained, "…we do the report cards where we do our, our parent-teacher conferences." In this case, her presence at the parent-teacher conferences allowed her to receive the report card that allowed her to monitor her child's performance in school. Christine, however, noted that "…at times I may just stop in and find out what's goin' on." Christine's unstructured visits served as a means of monitoring her child's progress and keeping abreast of the things going on at her child's school.

Angela's visits were not as unstructured as Christine's, however. Angela explained, "Well, I volunteer a lot at my son's school, at my child's school. I'm one of the parents that get real *(laughs)* real involved in my child's education." Angela's comment suggests that she perceived volunteering as a practice that is not as common, making her

"real involved" in comparison to other parents at the school. Angela was the only participant to report volunteering at the school, which may support this perception.

Mary reported a consistent presence at her child's school during times of conflict. For example, Mary described an incident with her child on the school bus:

> If any situations come up, I automatically deal with it right then. Like, she had a bus situation one day, well, a couple'a times, and the kids were being disruptive on the bus. And I went right up to the school, talked to the principal, like, you know, "This is a problem." And then it became a problem like two or three times. So I went over her head to the administrator. And the administrator, you know, handled it. The next day, the person was off'a the bus.

In this situation, Mary visited the school in order to address a concern regarding a conflict between her child and another student. Mary's intent was to resolve this conflict with the school principal in order to create a more comfortable environment for her child.

One participant noted that she picked up her child from school every day, which allowed her to speak with her child's teacher regarding her child's performance at school. As Jeanette noted, "If there's an issue that day, it's gonna be addressed when you pick your child up from school." Jeanette's consistent presence at the school at the end of the school day allowed her to speak with the relevant parties regarding accomplishments and concerns regarding her child's performance.

*Reading school-based communication.* While some participants did not report communication with their child's teacher, they did read materials from their child's school that informed them about their child's progress. Jeanette reported that she reviewed a folder that her child took home every day, explaining, "You know what

happened that day if there was an issue." Danielle reported that she used the "tracker" in order to inform practices within the home:

> …for the most part I do make sure, you know, I read all'a my kids' notes that they bring home from school. The teacher may jot somethin' down and say, 'Okay, well, this child had a hard day with math today and we were workin' on…' um, subtractions or somethin' like that, or carryin'. So then I'll help him or her with their homework so that they can get a better understandin' of it.

In this example, Danielle described homework assistance in the area of concern, as well as supplemental instruction that she provided in order to help her child understand the concept at home. With the support of the written forms of school-based communication, the parents were able identify skill deficits or areas of concern, and respond to their children accordingly.

*Creating opportunities to learn.* Four out of 12 participants described efforts to create learning opportunities within their home environment. These practices were primarily related to supplemental instruction in areas of weakness. In addition, these efforts were often related to the content that was discussed in class, but was not associated with a specific homework assignment. For example, Danielle explained a strategy that she used to support her child to learn subtraction, noting, "I try to break it down and show easier ways, um, on how to count, to get the number." Danielle used such strategies when her child's teacher relayed concerns regarding his ability to grasp subtraction while in class.

Yvette, however, created learning opportunities through the use of materials provided by her child's teacher. Yvette recalled, "I've asked the teacher to lend me school

books so that I can keep 'em at home so she can do extra school work on the side." Although the texts were not related to a particular problem of concern, they allowed for increased practice in the content that was covered at school, increasing exposure to the content.

  *Homework support.* Two out of the 12 participants identified homework support as a means of supporting their child's education. Danielle explained that she helps "… [her child] with [her] homework so that [she] can get a better understandin' of it." Danielle supports her child with homework when it appears that her child is struggling, allowing her to step in and assist the child in the areas of difficulty. Tatiana's approach to homework support differed from Danielle's, however. As opposed to support that was related to areas of concern, Tatiana's support was based on directives from her child's teacher. Tatiana explained, "…if the teacher gives us an assignment, gives her an assignment…whatever I'm supposed to do I kinda just do." Based on Tatiana's criteria, if her child's assignment called for parent participation, she would support her child with homework completion. Otherwise, she was not likely to participate in the practice. Both participants engaged in practices that allowed for homework support, although the determining factor for participation varied from the child need to teacher request (depending on the parent).

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

**Contents of School-parent Compacts**

The first goal of the current study was to examine the contents of the school-parent compacts within the elementary schools in two school districts.

**School-parent compacts.** While each school district had two elementary schools, Green Meadows District had one school-parent compact for the entire district. In contrast, Cedar School District had a separate school-parent compact for each school (although many of the items within the compact were the same). The current study examined the contents of the school-parent compacts at a district level as a whole. It was hypothesized that across the school districts, the compacts would heavily promote practices related to homework completion (i.e., Learning at Home) and school-based engagement practices (i.e., Communication and Volunteering) while practices related to parenting and school or district-level decision-making would not be promoted. The results partially supported the hypothesis across the compacts.

At Cedar School District, Communication practices made up over a third of the compact statements (43%), followed by Parenting at 21% and Decision Making at 14%. Volunteering, Learning at Home, and Collaborating with the Community were the least represented at 7% of the compact statements. Within Green Meadows District, Parenting represented the most compact statements at 50%, followed by Communicating at 31% and Learning at Home at approximately 19% of the statements. Neither Volunteering, Decision Making, or Collaborating with the Community were present within the Green Meadows compact.

Communication.  Practices related to parent communication with the child's school were among the most prevalent practices across school districts. This supports the hypothesis that communication practices would be heavily promoted within the school-parent compacts. Practices such as reading information provided by the school, communicating with the child's teacher, notifying the school of changes in address, and monitoring attendance were present within both compacts. Previous studies have stressed the importance of communication between the home and school settings in order to foster academic success (Fan & Chen, 2001; Williams & Sánchez, 2012). The presence of these practices emphasizes the importance of communication within these districts amongst both the parent and school staff.

Learning at home. While support with homework was the dominant practice described within the Learning at Home category, other practices within Epstein's Learning at Home category were not identified at high rates within either compact. These results suggest that within both school districts, Learning at Home was viewed narrowly, focused on practices related to homework support. Epstein's conceptualization of Learning at Home examines this category more broadly however, as it can include any means by which a parent could engage in interactive activities with their child or discuss topics that could promote student learning (Epstein, 1995; Epstein & Sanders, 2000). As currently written, each of the school-parent compacts did not discuss varied ways in which parents can be engaged in the learning environment beyond support with homework completion.

*Homework support.*  Results suggested that homework assistance was present within both compacts. Within Green Meadows District, homework assistance was

divided into three separate practices (identifying a specific time, identifying a space, and checking for homework completion), while in Cedar School District it took the form of "checking for completion." Literature on homework support suggests that there are several specific practices such as supervision of homework completion, creating structures for homework completion (i.e., time and space for homework completion), direct completion of homework assignments, and teaching metacognitive strategies to aid in the completion of homework (Epstein & Sanders, 2000). As such, Green Meadows appeared to describe homework support in a manner that supports the varied aspects of the practice that are reflected in the literature, while Cedar was characterized by a more narrow view of the practices that are embedded within homework assistance.

Volunteering. In contrast with Learning at Home and Communication, the results were different with regard to volunteering at school. Cedar's compacts included one item related to volunteering in the child's classroom, whereas Green Meadow's compact did not have any practices in the Volunteering category. This disconfirms the hypothesis that Volunteering would be prevalent within the school-parent compacts. Previous literature suggests that parent participation in school-based practices such as parent volunteering is less likely among working class and poor parents given the barriers to access schools such as inflexible work schedules (Bratlinger, 2003; Hassrick & Schneider, 2009). Perhaps, in development of the compacts, the participants did not place as much emphasis on these practices given the low likelihood of participation. These conclusions may have been grounded in assumptions related to the low-income parent population or research literature, although the factors that contributed to such decisions are unknown.

In spite of these assumptions, the participants who developed the compacts in Cedar School District may support volunteering within their schools, thus putting it in their compacts as a desired practice for their parents. In addition, volunteering is a commonly supported form of engagement within schools, so its inclusion in the Cedar School District compact may be a continuation of presumed practices related to parental engagement. (Pomerantz et al., 2007).

Parenting.  In addition to school-based activities, practices related to Parenting were the most prevalent in Green Meadows District, and was the second most common in Cedar School District. This discomfirms the hypothesis that parenting practices would not be represented well within the compacts. As mentioned by Lareau (2003), research on parental engagement within low-income communities suggests that parenting practices are common forms of parent participation. This would reflect the development of compacts that are geared toward the practices that are likely to take place within these communities, as opposed to the development of a compact that is rooted in middle class values and expectations.

Decision-making.  Practices related to the category of Decision-Making were represented in the Cedar School District compacts but not in Green Meadows District compact. This partially supported the hypothesis that this practice would not be represented well within the compacts. Historically, teachers of minority and low-income children perceive limited school-based participation from their parents. As Kim (2009) noted, there is an assumption that these "parents do not have the time, interest, money, or energy to support what they are doing, so they bypass the parents, thinking that they are helping them, by not bothering them." The perception is not necessarily unfounded, as

research has demonstrated limited school-based participation, particularly within decision-making organizations (Ingram et al., 2007; Pomerantz, 2007). As a result, the members of the committee that developed the compacts may have considered some of the assumptions related to their parent population during the development of the compact at Green Meadows District. In contrast with this finding, it should be noted that 95% of the student population within the district are ethnic minorities, while Green Meadows has a more ethnically diverse student population. Given the population, research would suggest that Decision-making would not be identified as an essential engagement practice within Cedar School District. However, studies have shown that some schools have sought to defy this expectation, promoting committee involvement and encouraging parent input during decision-making (Smith et al., 2011). While the practices that were utilized by Cedar School District to promote Decision-Making were not investigated, it is possible that the committee identified Decision-Making as an integral practice to support student success, regardless of assumptions that may be held about participation rates amongst this population of parents.

**Parental Reports of Engagement Practices**

Another area of focus within the current study was to examine the degree to which parents reported participation in the forms of engagement that were described within the compact. It was hypothesized that parents would report a higher level of participation in practices that required engagement within the home and greater community, with lower levels of participation in practices that required more direct interactions within the school.

Across both districts, the findings supported these hypotheses. Parent reports of practices related to child-rearing were generally higher than the other practices within the compacts. While parents reported reviewing school-based communications (e.g., reviewing information the child brings home, communication regarding child misconduct, ways to track student progress via web-based programs), they were less likely to report initiating contact with school staff or teachers. One possible explanation for this finding is that practices that are embedded within parenting styles and parent-child communication may lead to the forms of monitoring and support that allow them to be aware of and engage with their child's academic and behavioral development while at school despite minimal direct communication with the child's school. This means of academic monitoring and support could also extend to curricular materials, as parents in Green Meadows District were more likely to report knowledge of what the child is learning, despite lower rates of contact with their child's teacher. For example, reviewing homework may serve as an opportunity for the parent to understand the information that their child is learning at school. In addition, the parent may directly ask their child about what they learned in school as a means of keeping track of the pace of the curriculum.

Volunteering in schools was one of the least reported practices (although it was within one of the three compacts). This finding is consistent with previous research that has found low levels of parental volunteering within the schools in low-income communities (Ingram et al., 2007). Consistent volunteering at school is impacted by a number of variables, such as availability, discomfort, and dissatisfaction with the school or school staff (Ingram et al., 2007; Wanat, 2010).

Across the school districts, parents reported low levels of participation in practices related to decision-making. This supports the original hypothesis of this study, in which participation in decision-making practices were less likely to be reported by the parents. For example, parents reported low levels of participation in attending school board meetings or policy groups that engage in decision-making related to the implementation of policies and programming at the school, district, and state level (e.g., advisory committees, school support team). In a study that surveyed 220 parents of elementary school children in a low-income community in the midwestern United States, parents were less likely to participate in Decision-Making practices than any of the other typologies within Epstein's framework (Ingram, Wolfe, and Lieberman, 2007). This was the case despite parents reporting that they participated in decisions related to their child's education on a weekly basis on average. This suggests that parents' conceptualization of decision-making may represent decisions that are made within the household that are related to their child's education (e.g., homework completion times, arrival times, when to complete extra-curricular activities) rather than within schools.

In a review of literature on the forms of parental involvement, Pomerantz, Moorman, and Litwack (2007) argued that parents may provide support for their children within the home and school settings in controlling and autonomy-supportive ways. Controlling parents may utilize pressure on their children for a particular outcome, making explicit demands and expectations for their children to perform in certain ways. This could manifest itself in practices such as monitoring and dictating child behavior at school, or dictating topics for an assignment or project. Autonomy supportive parents, however, allow their children to problem solve on their own, allowing them to make their

own decisions regarding their behavior while exploring their environment. These practices could include allowing their children to develop their own schedules for homework completion or allowing the child to take ownership of their school by showing the parent around the campus. By deciding which approach to use, these practices, which extend beyond participation in organizations related to the school, may allow parents to feel that they are able to make decisions that impact their child's education even though their participation in school-based organizations is limited.

**Parent Definitions of Engagement**

Parent definitions of engagement were examined in an effort to garner information about the manner in which parents reported the ways in which they are engaged in their child's education. While a majority of the practices were in the category of Parenting (42.24% of the items), this was closely followed by Learning at Home (38.79% of the items). This supports a portion of the hypothesis, as a majority of the identified practices are considered to be home-based activities. The Parenting category supported the creation of structure within the home environment and providing their child with basic needs within the home (Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003). For example, parents reported creating schedules, providing meals, and supporting regular sleep schedules within the home. Parents also reported that they established a supportive learning environment where they reiterated the importance of school and education, as well as an implementation of a reward system for positive reports of school behavior and academic performance in school. Research supports such practices, as these regular parenting practices have been shown to support child development and academic achievement (Jeynes, 2010).

In addition to parenting practices, parents reported a number of ways in which they supported their child's education through Learning at Home. Parents reported several activities, such as reading at home, creating worksheets related to academic content for their child to complete, and allowing their child to play educationally-themed activities on the internet (i.e., Sprout, Nick Jr. websites). Several parents noted that they "played teacher" at home, allowing their child to "teach" the parent the content from the school day. These findings further support the initial hypothesis, as these practices took place within the home and indirectly supported their child's academic development.

Within the area of home-based forms of engagement, the Collaborating with the Community category had the least number of reported practices. Among the practices listed in their responses, parents reported taking their child to the library for free programming, enrolling their child in after-school tutoring programs, and taking their child to craft shows in the neighborhood as forms of educational support. Such findings are related to the concept of situated learning, in which students can learn concepts when they are required to problem-solve and interact with educational concepts in real-world environments (Lave & Wenger, 1991). While research on situated learning focuses primarily on adult learners, research on informal learning environments suggests that these non-assessed spaces that are separate from the school can foster learning experiences within the community (Riedinger, 2012). When parents engage in informal conversations with their children, they can activate learning and promote critical thinking skills. For example, parents can prompt their children to examine details within a given setting, model enthusiasm about the concepts they observe in the environment, and ask questions that may guide their child's problem solving skills. Each of these practices can

support child learning in informal learning spaces as they engage in meaning making within the given setting (Riedinger, 2012).

In contrast to the practices outside of the school environment, parents' definitions of their engagement rarely mentioned school-based forms of engagement such as Communication and Volunteering. This supports the hypothesis regarding limited participation in school-based forms of engagement. As noted in previous literature, parents in low-income communities are less likely to report participation in these conventional school-based and school-directed practices (Cooper, 2010; Jeynes, 2007; Kohl et al., 2000; Williams & Sánchez, 2012).

Practices under the category of Decision-Making were not identified by many of the parents in the study. Across income levels, consistent participation in Decision-Making practices are low, although it tends to be lower among low-income populations (Ingram et al., 2007; Mapp, 2003; Smith, 2006). While concerns related to availability and satisfaction are noted as possible contributors, the social networks possessed by the parents may play a role as well. Across income levels, parents who can identify a greater number of parents that they talk to about their children that are from their child's school (as opposed to relatives or family friends) are more likely to participate in school-based activities (Sheldon, 2002). The parents within the study may not have relationships with other parents within the school, which may contribute to a decline in participation within the school-based organizations and activities.

**Motivating Factors Predicting Parental Engagement**

Another goal of the current study was to examine motivating factors underlying parental engagement, as defined within the school-parent compact. While 32% of the

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variance in parental engagement was explained by the control variables (SES, child age, and parent ethnicity), an additional 17% of the model was explained by the motivational factors within Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler's Model of the Parental Involvement Process (2005). It was hypothesized that each group of constructs (motivation beliefs, parent reports of invitations to become involved, and life context variables) would significantly predict parental engagement practices as defined by the school-parent compacts. In contrast with the original hypothesis, parent motivation beliefs did not account for the most variance and did not account for a significant change in the variance when these variables were entered into the model. However, perceptions of invitations from others accounted for the most variance in the model (11%), while life context variables accounted for 4% of the model. This differs from previous studies, in which role construction and self-efficacy beliefs contributed significantly to parental engagement practices among elementary school children (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Reed, Jones, Walker, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2000).

There are several potential explanations for these contrary findings. Given the reported relationship with culture and beliefs regarding parental involvement, it is possible that some of the variance was accounted for within the control variables. In addition, it should be noted that parental self-efficacy had a negative (although not significant) correlation with parental engagement in the regression model. This suggests that parents with higher ratings of self-efficacy are likely to have lower ratings of parental engagement practices as described within the school-parent compact. One plausible explanation of this finding is that parents who possess a greater sense of self-efficacy regarding their ability to influence their child's educational experience may be more

likely to expand beyond the types of practices that are suggested by the school, choosing more varied means of supporting their child's education. According to self-determination theory, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are influenced by perceived competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 1987). Parents could be influenced by autonomous thought when considering parental engagement practices, as they may feel confident in their ability to self-select practices of their choice. This would allow them to go beyond the limitations of the behaviors defined within the compacts, making their own decisions about the relevant and appropriate practices to support their child.

Previous research also suggests that parental self-efficacy is more closely related to home-based forms of involvement than school-based practices (Smith et al., 1997; Waanders, Mendez, & Downer, 2007). When combined, however, the compacts for both districts consisted of predominantly school-based forms of involvement. As a result, the motivating factors could be more indicative of parent decisions to participate in practices that were not the focus of the compacts within their given school districts.

Similar to self-efficacy beliefs, parents with greater awareness of their role in influencing their child's education may be more attuned to the impact of the implied and overt messages that they sent to their children, and may be more intentional about the multitude of practices they use in order to impact their child's education. While the overall mean for role activity beliefs was relatively high within the study ($M = 53.22$, $SD = 6.40$), it did not significantly explain parent engagement. Studies of parents in low-income communities discuss an array of means in which parents support their child's education, such as parental expectations that articulate the value and importance of an education, teaching specific social skills, or obtaining clothing for their child (Drummond

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& Stipek, 2004; Jeynes, 2007). Consequently, parents, while acknowledging their role in supporting their child's education, may be enacting these beliefs in ways that are not measured by practices within the compact.

The construct that explained the most variance in the model was parent perceptions of invitations to become involved. More specifically, general invitations for involvement from the teacher was the strongest unique contributor to the model, as well as one of the two uniquely significant contributors to the model. This finding is consistent with previous research studies that highlight the importance of the parent-teacher relationship in relation to parental engagement (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Overstreet et al., 2005; Simon, 2004). Given their unique role with the child, teachers can contact individual parents in order to invite them to school-based activities, in addition to suggesting activities that parents could participate in within the home and their greater community as a means of supporting their child's education. It should be noted that perceptions of teacher invitations were significantly and positively correlated with perceptions of knowledge and skills, time and energy, and role activity beliefs. The results from this study suggest that within this population of parents, direct invitations and suggestions by the school, teacher, and child appeared to have a unique contribution to engagement in practices dictated by the school as important practices for parent participation. Given the significant contribution to parental engagement, teachers who are aware of the school and district expectations could most effectively communicate these suggested practices to the parents within the district while potentially influencing parent perceptions of the manner in which they may support their child's education.

In addition to parent perceptions of invitations, life context variables also significantly contributed to the model. More specifically, while both perceptions of knowledge and skills and perceptions of time and energy were significantly correlated with the outcome variable, only parent perceptions of time and energy provided a uniquely significant contributor to the model. Research regarding the perceived structural barriers such as emotional and time constraints suggests that employment and other obligations would serve as a barrier to parental engagement, particularly within low-income communities (Christenson, 2004; Heymann & Earle, 2000). It should be noted, however, that the average for both of these variables within the current study was relatively high ($M = 48.31$ out of a total of 54 and $M = 31.54$ out of a total of 36). This was despite the finding that a majority of the participants in the current study reported some form of employment (from irregular employment to full time employment) and a majority of participants reporting 2 or more children within their household. This suggests that, on average, parents within this study not only felt that they had enough time and energy to participate in common practices related to parental engagement within the compact, but they also generally felt that they had the skills to support and assist their children in an array of activities related to parental engagement.

The parent perceptions in relation to the specific compact practices should be considered as well, given the relatively high parent ratings of school-based practices within all of the compacts. An examination of the scales that measure the perceptions of knowledge and skills and perceptions of time and energy primarily assessed school-based forms of involvement and homework participation, such as the ability to volunteer at school, communicate with their child's teacher, and supervise or help with homework.

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The high ratings of ability suggest that the parents in this study may feel that they have the knowledge base and time to engage in the school-based practices, yet they may not participate in the practices for reasons that extend beyond their perceptions of their own abilities.

**Parents' Lived Experiences with Parental Engagement**

Interviews with a subset of the participants allowed for additional exploration of factors related to parental engagement. The hypothesis for this portion of the analysis was that their personal experiences with parental engagement and home-school partnerships would reflect their relationship with the practices defined in school-parent compacts. The findings within the interview and parent survey data support the hypothesis in several ways.

Across PEP groups, participants reported active participation while they were in school, with participation in school-based organizations and extra-curricular activities. However, it should be noted that those within the lower quartile generally did not report such participation in school. In contrast, nearly all of the participants in the lowest PEP quartile noted a general disinterest in school, which they often attributed to teacher apathy. A majority of the participants expressed social concerns while they were in school, such as bullying or finding a social niche within their peer group. Research on parents' previous experiences in school suggests that these experiences may influence feelings of competence related to parental engagement while influencing the likelihood of participation in school-based practices (Anderson & Minke, 2007). These findings were supported within the current study as well. Although valence (as measured through the VAS) did not significantly contribute to the overall regression model, scores on the VAS

were significantly correlated with knowledge and skills and perceptions of general invitations from the school. Increased awareness of some of the parents' schooling experiences may be helpful when examining the effectiveness and appropriateness of general invitations to involvement, as well as some of the practices that may be promoted within school-based compacts.

Interview participants reported that their parents engaged in a number of home-based involvement practices (e.g., creating opportunities to learn, encouraging words, expressing expectations, homework help). This coincides with the participants' reports on their own home-based practices, which were among the most highly rated across the school districts. Although they were not within the compacts, the interview participants described additional practices that could be classified as engagement practices. For example, some of the participants indicated that parent employment allowed for financial resources to be in place to supply educational needs, such as tutors and tuition for private schooling. Nonetheless, a majority of the participants did not classify employment as an engagement practice, but as a barrier. These perceptions correspond to previous literature that refers to employment as a barrier to parental engagement practices.

While the parents in the interview did not associate their own parent's income and employment as a means of supporting their child's education, parent definitions of their own involvement were related to resources that may be acquired through employment. A number of responses to the "Helping Children in School" open ended question (i.e., "I make sure she has all the supplies she needs for her class"; "I feed her an amazing breakfast every day"; "I make sure he always looks good, smells good, has clean clothes on") suggested that they engaged in practices that allowed them to provide necessary

resources to support their children, even though they did not acknowledge these practices as relevant to their own educational experiences.

A majority of the participants (seven out of twelve) reported that their parents provided direct or indirect expectations for academic success. As a result of consequences, rewards for a desirable academic performance, homework support, a structure that supported academic success, and/or expressed values regarding the importance of education, the parents of the participants indicated that schooling was valued within their household. Jeanette, for example, discussed the manner in which her mother reinforced academic success in school, recalling "Mom was more of a spoiler. Bring me a good report card, we're gonna go get you those shoes you wanted and an outfit. That kinda reinforcement kinda, kinda always works." When embedded within the home, these forms of communication and parenting practices serve as "salient" forms of engagement within schooling and child development (Jeynes, 2010).

Although the participants were able to identify practices that their parents engaged in while they were in school, a majority of the participants (eight out of twelve) reported a lack of involvement by their parents. This finding was across the PEP participant rank, as participants in the upper, lower, and middle two quartiles reported a lack of involvement. This finding, however, contradicts the varied practices that were reported during the interviews. This could be due to the narrow interpretation of terms like "parental support in school." Drummond and Stipek (2004) explored the parent beliefs related to engagement in school using an ethnically diverse sample of low-income parents from rural and urban areas throughout the United States. Using a mixed methods approach, the researchers asked parents what they believed parents "should" do in order

to support their child's education. The results of the study revealed that support with homework, reading, math, and "knowing what their child was learning" was at the top of the range of responses. These embedded connotations may have come to mind initially as the participants spoke of their parents, although they were open to acknowledging practices that were not presumed to be parental engagement practices during the interview.

With these connotations in mind, it is interesting to note that school-based practices were the most common themes related to the participants' discussion of their own engagement practices (and ways to engage in partnerships with their child's school) within the interview. As parents of their own children, parent-teacher communication practices and displays of a visible presence at the child's school (i.e., picking up their child from school, volunteering, attending parent-teacher conferences, visiting their child's classroom) were the most prevalent practices used to support their child's education. These themes were present within the interviews in spite of their personal experiences (positive or negative) within school systems. While the parents reported home-based practices (i.e., creating opportunities to learn within the home, homework support), parents across PEP rank were more likely to report school-based practices related to parent-teacher communication within the interview. This was in contrast to their own parents, who were less likely to engage in these practices. This also differed from the overall sample's open-ended responses and survey responses, as these practices were among the least represented categories. This could be related to the connotations that may come to mind in conversations about parental engagement in school and home-

school partnerships, as these forms of practices are common representations of parental engagement (Drummond & Stipek, 2004).

As an interviewer, I took care to ask about engagement via different questions and probing of responses throughout the semi-structured interviews. This may have led to further elaboration on engagement practices of their parents, despite a perceived of a lack of engagement. In addition to the varied ways in which the question was asked during the interview, it is possible that the participants held a particular perspective regarding what constitutes an "engaged parent" while dismissing the practices that they recall their parents being a part of throughout their youth (or that they themselves participate in). At the same time, this perspective may have directed the parents toward a discussion of more school-based practices, particularly in relation to school-based communication practices. It is possible that the parents within the interview portion of the study also possessed this narrowed view of parental engagement, leading them to draw conclusions about their parents' role in their education, despite the diverse ways in which the parents displayed their support.

**Limitations**

While efforts were made to address potential limitations during the development of the study, there are weaknesses that should be noted. To begin with, this study examined school-parent compacts and parental engagement practices within a low-income community. Due to challenges with recruitment, it should be noted that the sample may not be representative of all parents of elementary school children in the districts. Although parents were recruited from a number of spaces, I was limited to respondents who were interested in participating in a research study. While these parents

may have varied levels of school-based parental engagement in education, their engagement in programming provided by the community agency, community programming, and school-based communication may make them different from parents who are not engaged in these activities.

Although I used multiple recruitment methods, the design of the study lends itself to the possibility of self-selection. A large portion of the study required participants to complete a survey, which speaks to the literacy skills that they must possess. In addition, over half of the participants did not complete the open-ended response question, which would require written expression and reading comprehension abilities. Those with limited literacy skills may be less inclined to participate in the study, leading to self-selection.

The generalizability of the study should also be considered. For example, the phenomenological approach to interviewing allows for the researcher to examine the perceptions and life experiences of those interviewed, but it is not meant to generalize to all parents in the area. In order to understand the essence of those interviewed, the skill of the interviewer is critical. The ability to discern when to probe, bypass, or revisit certain questions would be required in order to gather as much information as possible from the interview participants. In addition, the ability to establish rapport and develop trust quickly are vital when conducting interviews. As a result, it is possible that the participants could have offered more or less information about their experiences with another interviewer. As the sole interviewer, I was able to establish a degree of consistency related to my approach across the interviews, which impact the generalizability of the results.

The demographics of the participants are important to consider as well, given the focus on parents of elementary school children. Research has shown that parent involvement in schools declines during middle and high school.  Parents of older students may have different views and practices of parental engagement, indicating the need for caution in generalizing these findings. Additionally, the perspective of fathers was limited within this study. A majority of the survey participants were female, while the entire interview participant subgroup consisted of female respondents. The small number of men in the sample also limits the generalizability of the results.

Due to the overall nature of qualitative work, implications can be drawn from the data although the themes generated from the qualitative analyses were not meant to be representative of all the parents within the schools or school districts in the area. As a result, the definitions of engagement (by the districts and the parents) are indicative of parental engagement that occur within the population of study, although it would not be appropriate to assume that the definitions would hold true across low-income communities in general.

Another limitation of this study is the manner in which parental engagement practices were measured. All of the parental engagement practices were collected via parent self-report, and parents were asked to estimate the degree to which they participated in the practices over the course of the academic year. Issues with recall, timing of survey distribution, and social desirability could contribute to inflation or minimization of the number of practices that were reported. The reports were not verified or supported via teacher reports or observations, so it is difficult to determine the accuracy of the self-report. Despite these concerns, however, parent self-report does

allow further understanding of parent perceptions of their behaviors, which is likely to yield useful information as well.

Within the qualitative measures, there are limitations that should be noted as well. The Helping Children in School open-ended question was structured broadly, prompting parents to discuss a variety of ways in which the participants "helped" their children to be successful in school. However, the individual interview prompts focused participants on how they engaged in partnerships with their child's school. This may have constrained their responses related to school-based practices. Given the structure of the interview and open-ended question, the framework and content of the questions should be considered in relation to the responses that were given within these forms of data collection.

In addition to the potential inaccuracy of parent self-report data, it should be noted that the quantitative analyses assessed correlation patterns, which do not necessarily imply causation. For example, while the study highlights the importance of parent-teacher communication and perceived time and energy in relation to reports of parent engagement, the design of the study does not afford a causal explanation of these relationships. Future studies could explore the causal relationships between these factors to aid in future understanding of the concepts.

**Conclusions**

School-parent compacts are meant to serve as an agreement between schools and parents that specify agreed upon practices for both parties (ESEA). As a part of the Parental Involvement Plan, the compacts should be designed in collaboration with parents and staff members within the schools, reflecting the expectations of both parties to promote academic success in schools. Results from this study suggest that the practices

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within the compact differ from those identified by the parents in many ways. While the compacts promoted home-school communication and school-based volunteering, these practices were not identified and emphasized as common practices by parents within many of the parent-focused data collection methods (portions of the interview, parent report of practices, qualitative definitions of engagement). However, there was alignment in relation to parenting practices, creating opportunities to learn while at home, and parent-teacher communication methods that were not necessarily bi-directional. The discrepancies between the contents of the compact and parent reports of engagement call attention to the manner in which the compacts are developed.

The type of compact, more specifically, whether it is a district or school-level compact, should be considered during the initial stages of development. In order to develop compacts that are informed by the population of the school and its resources, compacts should not only stem from the assumption that the opportunities are available within the school, but also account for the variation in staff and parent perspectives regarding parent participation. To support these efforts, school-parent compacts may be more representative of parent practices at the school-level than the district level. A district level compact may allow for schools to generate district-wide expectations for parental engagement; however, a school-specific compact may allow for more detailed expectations that are targeted toward the parents that interact within a given school, taking into account the climate and culture of the specific school. Additionally, a district-level compact does not account for the availability of resources and programming that may be more readily available within a given school. As such, a school-specific compact may better account for these variations.

The discrepancy between the compacts and parent definitions of behaviors should be considered as the contents are developed as well. In the current study, parents were less likely to report school-based forms of engagement across all forms of data collection except the interview, when they expressed the importance of communication with their child's teacher. School-based practices (i.e., home-school communication) were heavily emphasized in the compacts and the subset of parent interviews. While school-based forms of engagement may be desired by members of the school or school district, research suggests that these practices bear less influence on academic outcomes than parenting style and expectations for academic performance in urban and low-income populations (Jeynes, 2005). This is encouraging, as the study suggests that the parents are engaged in a number of practices that can positively impact their academic outcomes in positive ways. As such, compacts may benefit from increased focus on practices that occur outside of the school, while acknowledging the parenting and learning strategies that are already occurring within the home. Practices that encourage relationship building and parent-teacher communication may also prove beneficial, as the interview participants valued their ability to monitor their child's progress through established pipelines of communication with their child's teacher.

While parents report use of several engagement practices outside of the school, neither the parents nor the compacts emphasized Collaborating with the Community. Through modeling and structured means of prompting and questioning the child, parents can support their child's learning in structured and unstructured settings (e.g., grocery store, community fair, craft stores). Given the increased likelihood of parent engagement

outside of the school, school-based staff may benefit from encouraging such practices within the community as a means of support.

Another key finding from this study was the importance of time and energy and invitations to participate in their child's schooling. Efforts to suggest practical forms of engagement through direct invitations are important, as they increase the likelihood of engagement in practices within the compact. The unique contribution of teacher invitations further highlights the importance of the parent-teacher relationship. Parents with established relationships and communication strategies with their child's teacher are more likely to engage in the practices that are desired by the school. These requests may display more relevance and meaning to parents, and can be tailored to the specific needs of their child. Teachers and parents play unique roles in observing and interacting with a child in alternate spaces, which could allow for parents and teachers to collaborate in order to address concerns across settings. As a result, teachers should be supported with tools that can help them develop relationships with parents that would allow them to suggest feasible, meaningful, and supportive practices that will impact their child's academic and social emotional growth.

Research suggests that a variety of approaches, such as home-school note programs, newsletters, and interactive homework with a parent-based component can support such aims (Cox, 2005; Hoover Dempsey, Walker, Jones et al., 2002). However, teachers may not feel prepared to develop such relationships with parents, particularly in environments where the status quo suggests a lack of parental engagement (Barnyak & McNelly, 2009). To counter such perspectives, teacher preparation programs could include coursework and field experiences that deal with parental engagement that goes

beyond conferences and requests for volunteers. Additionally, teachers that are currently employed within a school could benefit from professional development opportunities that focus on strategies to develop relationships with parents, as well as ways in which they may approach parents in order to suggest specific ways in which they may support their child's education. As teachers develop relationships with parents, they may be able to praise and acknowledge the practices that are already enacted within the home while encouraging parents to try other practices that do not feel overwhelming or unrealistic due to time constraints.

The results suggest that school staff and parents may benefit from acknowledging practices that may not fall under traditional definitions of parental engagement. For example, parents who are employed should be recognized for their efforts, as their employment can allow them to provide basic needs and school resources via their financial means (e.g., tuition, tutors, school supplies, clothing). Neither the compacts nor the parents regularly acknowledged the influence that employment has on their child's education; rather, it was viewed as a barrier by the parents who were interviewed in the current study. While this viewpoint further supports the idea regarding low-income parents and the perceived barriers to participation, a more broad view of engagement that includes this form of participation may help school staff change their perspective regarding parents in low-income communities, while further developing the relationship with parents by moving from a deficit-focused to a more strengths-based perspective regarding parent participation.

The results from this study may ultimately benefit schools as they strive to develop policies that are responsive to and informed by the needs of parent stakeholders. Further

understanding of the manner in which "parental engagement" is conceptualized within school policies and low-income households adds to the growing literature base regarding the need to broaden the manner in which parental engagement is discussed and promoted within policy documents that are meant to target low-income communities. Additionally, the findings from this study add to the literature base on the generalizability of the Model of the Parental Involvement Process (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005), particularly within Title 1 schools that serve low-income communities. Enhanced understanding of the applicability of this theory could help administrators and policy makers make culturally and regionally appropriate decisions about programming and policies that may influence home-school partnerships.

**Future Research**

Within this study, Epstein (1987) and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's Model of the Parental Involvement Process (2005) were useful ways of conceptualizing engagement practices and factors that may be related to parental engagement., These models, however, did not address how social identities (e.g., gender, race, socioeconomic status) may influence how parents construe the meaning of parental engagement as well as their actual practices. Future work in this area could utilize qualitative and quantitative methods to explore the manner in which social identities may play a role in shaping how parents make sense of parent engagement in ways that go beyond Epstein's typologies.

Future investigations related to the development and use of school-parent compacts are needed in order to understand how the school-parent compact can be further developed and utilized in effective ways. While the current study examined the contents of school-parent compacts, it was not possible to understand which parties took part in

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the development of the compact. An examination of the personnel that developed the compact would allow for further understanding of those who took part in the construction of the compact, and how this may have influenced its development. In addition, qualitative interviews with the participants would allow for more in depth understanding of why the items in the compacts were selected, and why other practices were omitted from the compact.

Studies on ways to utilize school-parent compacts in meaningful ways would also prove beneficial. Although a majority of the literature on school-parent compacts suggests that they are not actively used documents, there are schools that utilize school-parent compacts as a guide to facilitate programmatic efforts related to parental engagement (Henderson et al., 2011). Future research could examine schools that not only develop compacts that consider their parent population, but could also examine the ways in which such schools create a climate that supports and encourages the practices within the compact. These schools could then be assessed in order to examine their impact on academic and behavioral outcomes. In 2008, Connecticut's Department of Education launched such an initiative with five urban school districts. The Department of Education provided support in the form of professional development, consultant support, and follow-up support to help school districts tailor their compacts to their student and parent population in meaningful ways (Henderson et al., 2011). Similar efforts could be executed in more varied regions and low-income school districts in the United States, while monitoring such an initiative's impact on a child's academic and behavioral outcomes.  An examination of the effectiveness of more tailored school-parent compacts, as well as the potential value and benefits of compacts can be examined in the future,

highlighting the need to develop more specific plans for home-school partnerships while identifying specific forms of parental engagement.

Finally, research on the value of school-parent compacts should be explored. While this study examined factors related to parental engagement, it did not examine the benefits of practices stipulated by the compact for academic and behavioral outcomes. Given that policies mandating school-parent compacts are intended to encourage behaviors that contribute to academic success, future research should explore the effectiveness of compacts in accomplishing these goals. Although school-parent compacts are mandated as a part of a federal initiative, there is little research evidence of their effectiveness. Research that examines the effectiveness of compacts in promoting positive academic and behavioral outcomes could strengthen this policy mandate by providing needed empirical support. Such research could support the identification and implementation of evidence-based policies and practices for effective parental engagement.

APPENDICES

Appendix A:


Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement and Redefinitions (adapted from
Epstein et al., 2002)

Figure 8. Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement and Redefinitions (adapted from Epstein et al., 2002)

| Type of Involvement | Ways Schools Can Support this Form of Involvement | Examples of Practices | Redefinitions |
|---|---|---|---|
| Parenting | Help all families establish home environments to support children as students | Workshops, videotapes, etc. on parenting and child-rearing for each age and grade level | "Workshop" to mean more than an meeting about a topic held at the school building at a particular time; workshop also may mean making information about a topic available in a variety of forms that can be viewed, heard, or read anywhere, anytime |
| Communicating | Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and their children's progress | Weekly or monthly folders of student work sent home for review or comments | "Communication about school programs and children's progress" could men two-way, three-way, and many-way channels of communication that connect schools, families, students, and the community |
| Volunteering | Recruit and organize parent help and support | School and classroom volunteer program to help teachers, administrators, students, and other parents | "Volunteer" to mean anyone who supports school goals and children's learning or development in any way or place-not just during the school day and at the school building |

Figure 8 (cont'd)

| Learning at Home | Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning | Information in how to assist students to improve skills on various class and school assessments | "Homework" could be interactive activities done with those in the home or community; "Help" means encouraging, listening, reacting, praising, guiding, monitoring, and discussing-not "teaching" school subjects |
|---|---|---|---|
| Decision Making | Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives | Active PTA/PTO or other parent organizations, advisory councils, or committees (e.g., curriculum, safety, personnel) for parent leadership and parent participation | "Decision making" to mean a process of partnership, of shared views and actions toward shared goals, not a power struggle between conflicting ideas<br><br>"Parent leader" to mean a real representative, with opportunities and support to hear from and communicate with other families |
| Collaborating with the Community | Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development | Information on community activities that link to learning skills and talents, including summer programs for students | "Community" to mean not only the neighborhoods where students; homes and schools are located but also neighborhoods that influence student learning and development<br><br>"Community" rated not only by low or high social or economic qualities, but also by strengths and talents to support students, families, and schools<br><br>"Community" means all who are interested in and affected by the quality of education, not just families with children in the schools. |

Appendix B:


Demographic Characteristics of Recruitment Setting (Sunnydale)

Table 11. Demographic Characteristics of Recruitment Setting (Sunnydale)

| Characteristics | Sunnydale |
|---|---|
| **Population** | |
| Population, 2010 | 25,369 |
| Persons under 5 years, percent, 2010 | 7.3% |
| Persons under 18 years, percent, 2010 | 27.9% |
| Persons 65 years and over, percent, 2010 | 11.3% |
| Female persons, percent, 2010 | 53.2% |
| **Race/Ethnicity** | |
| White persons, percent, 2010[a] | 20.5% |
| Black persons, percent, 2010[a] | 73.2% |
| American Indian and Alaska Native persons, percent, 2010 [a] | 0.3% |
| Asian persons, percent, 2010[a] | 1.6% |
| Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, percent, 2010[a] | 0.1% |
| Persons reporting two or more races, percent, 2010 | 3.6% |
| Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin, percent, 2010[b] | 2.6% |
| White persons not Hispanic, percent, 2010 | 19.5% |
| **Language Use in the Home** | |
| Language other than English spoken at home age 5+, 2005-2009 | 8.9% |
| **Level of Education** | |
| High school graduates, percent of persons age 25+, 2005-2009 | 80.1% |
| Bachelor's degree or higher, persons age 25+, 2005-2009 | 12.5% |
| **Persons per Household** | |
| Persons per household, 2005-2009 | 2.68 |
| **Income** | |
| Per capita money income in past 12 months (2009 dollars) 2005-2009 | $17,502 |
| Median household income 2005-2009 | $34,402 |
| People of all ages in poverty - percent, 2005-2009 | 24.1% |

Note: Data is from the U.S. Census Bureau: State and County QuickFacts.
[a] Includes persons reporting only one race. [b] Hispanics may be of any race, so also are included in applicable race categories.

Appendix C:


Demographic Characteristics of the School Districts and Elementary Schools

Table 12. Demographic Characteristics of the Cedar School District

| Characteristics | Cedar |
|---|---|
| Total Schools | 5 (2 elementary schools) |
| Total Students | 3,310 |
| Student to Teacher Ratio | 24.89 |
| English Language Learner (ELL) students | 7 |
| Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) | 315 |
| Total Population under 18 | 4,086 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 65 |
| White | 231 |
| Black or African American | 3,633 |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 22 |
| Asian Alone | 3 |
| Hawaiian or Pacific Islander alone | 0 |
| Other race | 30 |
| 2 or more races | 167 |

Note: Data is from the Common Core of Data: Public School district data from 2009-2010, 2010-2011 school years.

Table 13. Demographic Characteristics of the Cedar School District (Elementary Schools)

| Characteristics | Cypress | Mulberry |
|---|---|---|
| Title 1 Status | School-wide | School-wide |
| Grades served | K-2 | 3-5 |
| Total students | 512 | 574 |
| Student to teacher ratio | 23.81 | 22.51 |
| Enrollment by race | | |
| American Indian or Native American | 0 | 3 |
| Asian or Pacific Islander | 2 | 0 |
| Black or African American | 504 | 560 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 1 | 1 |
| White | 5 | 10 |
| Enrollment by gender | | |
| Male | 275 | 297 |
| Female | 237 | 277 |
| Free lunch eligible | 437 | 476 |
| Reduced lunch eligible | 18 | 27 |

Note: Data is from the Common Core of Data: Public School district data from 2009-2010, 2010-2011 school years.

Table 14. Demographic Characteristics of the Green Meadows District

| Characteristics | Green Meadows |
|---|---|
| Total Schools | 7 (2 elementary schools) |
| Total Students | 2,597 |
| Student to Teacher Ratio | 19.21 |
| English Language Learner (ELL) students | 24 |
| Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) | 364 |
| Total Population under 18 | 4,278 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 190 |
| White | 2,048 |
| Black or African American | 1,993 |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 12 |
| Asian Alone | 172 |
| Hawaiian or Pacific Islander alone | 1 |
| Other race | 52 |
| 2 or more races | 190 |

Note: Data is from the Common Core of Data: Public School district data from 2009-2010, 2010-2011 school years.

Table 15. Demographic Characteristics of the Green Meadows District (Elementary Schools)

| Characteristics | Brook View | Cherry Tree |
|---|---|---|
| Title 1 Status | School-wide | School-wide |
| Grades served | K-5 | K-5 |
| Total students | 197 | 702 |
| Student to teacher ratio | 15.72 | 15.75 |
| Enrollment by race | | |
| American Indian or Native American | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Pacific Islander | 2 | 7 |
| Black or African American | 180 | 426 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 2 | 17 |
| White | 13 | 252 |
| Enrollment by gender | | |
| Male | 110 | 368 |
| Female | 87 | 334 |
| Free lunch eligible | 437 | 554 |
| Reduced lunch eligible | 18 | 45 |

Note: Data is from the Common Core of Data: Public School district data from 2009-2010, 2010-2011 school years.

Appendix D:

Research Participant Information and Consent Form – Survey

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

You are being asked to participate in a research project.  Researchers are required to provide a consent form to inform you about the study, to convey that participation is voluntary, to explain risks and benefits of participation, and to empower you to make an informed decision.  You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.

*Study Title:*
Recommendations versus reality: Factors related to parental engagement practices within school-parent compacts in a low-income community

*Researcher and Title:*
D'Andrea L. Jacobs, Doctoral Candidate
Evelyn R. Oka, Ph.D.

*Department and Institution:*
Department of Counseling, Educational Psychology, and Special Education
Michigan State University

**PURPOSE OF RESEARCH:**

You are being asked to participate in a research study of parental thoughts and feelings regarding different forms of involvement in their child's education, as well as parental thoughts on the ways schools try to promote parental involvement in education.  You have been selected as a possible participant because you have a child who attends a school that receives Title 1 funding. From this study, the researchers hope to learn about parent's perspectives regarding parental involvement, the different ways parents support their child's education, as well as the different ways the parents support their child's education.  All parents who have a child that attends an elementary school in in School District A or School District B are invited to participate in the study. Your participation in the study will take about 30 minutes.

**WHAT YOU WILL DO:**

You will complete a brief demographic form and complete a survey with several sections. The first section will ask about your thoughts about what it means to be involved, as well as things that may affect your ability to become involved in your child's education. The second section will ask you about different ways in which you may support your child's education. The final section will ask about an effort made by the school to encourage parent participation. If interested, you will be asked to participate in an (optional) interview on similar topics. The surveys (and interviews) will be completed for research purposes only, and the results will not be shared with you.

**POTENTIAL BENEFITS:**

You will not directly benefit from participation in this study. However, your participation in this study will contribute to the understanding of the different ways that parents support their children in school. Your participation will also contribute to the understanding of factors that are related to participation in certain forms of parental involvement. This research, along with future research, may increase our knowledge about the ways parents support their child's education, thus potentially benefiting children, families, and schools in the future.

**POTENTIAL RISKS:**

This study poses a minimal risk for you as a participant in this project, although there is the potential for psychological discomfort. You will complete surveys (and, if interested, an interview) about your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Answering some of the questions may cause you to experience some discomfort or distress. You can skip any question that you do not want to respond to.

**PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY:**

The data for this project will be kept confidential to the greatest extent allowable by law. Neither the researchers nor anyone else will be able to link data to you or your child. After you complete the survey, an identification number will be assigned to the survey and your name will be removed from all paperwork. The completed survey and interview recordings will be kept in a locked file cabinet, accessible to the researcher and research staff. All documents will be destroyed ten years after completion. The results of this study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but the identities of all research participants will remain anonymous. It will not be possible for readers to know who participated in the study.

**YOUR RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE, SAY NO, OR WITHDRAW**

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw from the study. You may also choose not to answer a specific question or stop participating at any time.  Choosing not to participate or withdrawing from this study will not make any difference in the quality of services that you or your child receive at your child's school. Whether you choose to participate or not will not affect your child's grade or evaluation at school.

**COSTS AND COMPENSATION FOR BEING IN THE STUDY:**

It does not cost anything to participate in this study. If you choose to participate, you will receive a $10 gift card to Wal-Mart or Kroger.

**CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS**

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researchers, D'Andrea Jacobs, by phone: 310-413-5976; email: jacobsd7@msu.edu or Evelyn Oka, by phone: 517-432-9615; email: evoka@msu.edu; 435 Erikson Hall, East Lansing, MI, 48824. If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 202 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

**DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT**

Please select a box and sign below.

Yes, I would like to participate in this research study.

No, I do not want to participate in this research study.

_____     _____
Signature                                                                    Date

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

Appendix E:


Flyer for Participation in Interview

**THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY!**

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Would you be interested in being interviewed as a part of this study? In the interview,

you will be asked to answer some questions about your child's school, as well as your

thoughts about schools. The interview will last between 45 minutes and 1 hour, and can

take place at your house, at Starfish Family Services, or another location that is

convenient for you. You will receive a $30 gift card to Kroger or Wal-Mart for your

participation in the interview. Whether or not you are interested, please check one of the

statements below.


_____ No, thank you. I AM NOT interested in being interviewed.


_____ Yes, I AM interested in being interviewed.


*Please complete the following (if you are interested in being interviewed):*

Name (please print): _____

Preferred phone number (please print): _____

Best time to contact (please print): _____

Email Address (please print): _____

Preferred method of contact? (circle one)    EMAIL    PHONE

Appendix F:


Research Participant Information and Consent Form – Interview

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

You are being asked to participate in a research project. Researchers are required to provide a consent form to inform you about the study, to convey that participation is voluntary, to explain risks and benefits of participation, and to empower you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.

*Study Title:*
Recommendations versus reality: Factors related to parental engagement practices within school-parent compacts in a low-income community

*Researcher and Title:*
D'Andrea L. Jacobs, Doctoral Candidate
Evelyn R. Oka, Ph.D.

*Department and Institution:*
Department of Counseling, Educational Psychology, and Special Education
Michigan State University

## PURPOSE OF RESEARCH:

You are being asked to participate in a research study of parent thoughts and feelings regarding different forms of involvement in their child's education, as well as parent thoughts on the ways schools try to promote parental involvement in education. You have been selected as a possible participant because you indicated interest when you completed a survey as a part of this project. From this study, the researchers hope to learn about parent's perspectives regarding parental involvement in school, the different ways parents support their child's education, as well as the different ways the parents support their child's education. All parents who completed a survey during the first part of the study are invited to participate in the interview. Your participation in the interview will take about 45-60 minutes.

## WHAT YOU WILL DO:

You will complete an interview in which you will be asked to talk about your child's school, as well as your thoughts about school. You will also be asked to talk about your opinion regarding an approach that some schools use to identify ways that parents can support their child's academic success. The interview will be completed for research purposes only, and the results will not be shared with you.

## POTENTIAL BENEFITS:

You will not directly benefit from participation in this study. However, your participation in this study will contribute to the understanding of the different ways that parents support their children in school. Your participation will also contribute to the

understanding of factors that are related to parental involvement in schools. This research, along with future research, may increase our knowledge about the ways parents support their child's education, which can potentially benefiting children, families, and schools in the future.

**POTENTIAL RISKS:**

This study poses a minimal risk for you as a participant in this project, although there is the potential for psychological discomfort. You will answer questions about your thoughts and feelings about schools. Answering some of the questions may cause you to experience some discomfort or distress. You can skip any question that you do not want to respond to.

**PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY:**

The data for this project will be kept confidential to the greatest extent allowable by law. Neither the researchers nor anyone else will be able to link data to you or your child. With your permission, the interview will be recorded for future examination. The interview recordings will be kept in a locked file cabinet, accessible to the researcher and research staff. The interview recordings will be transcribed for future analysis, although a pseudonym will be used in place of all participants. All documents will be destroyed ten years after completion. The results of this study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but the identities of all research participants will remain anonymous. It will not be possible for readers to know who participated in the study.

**YOUR RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE, SAY NO, OR WITHDRAW**

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw from the study. You may also choose not to answer a specific question or stop participating at any time. Choosing not to participate or withdrawing from this study will not make any difference in the quality of services that you or your child receive at your child's school, nor will it affect your child's grade or evaluation at school.

**COSTS AND COMPENSATION FOR BEING IN THE STUDY:**

It does not cost anything to participate in this study. If you choose to participate in the interview, you will receive a $30 gift card to Wal-Mart or Kroger.

**CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS**

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researchers:

D'Andrea Jacobs,

phone: 310-413-5976;
email: jacobsd7@msu.edu, or

Evelyn Oka,
phone: 517-432-9615;
email: evoka@msu.edu;
435 Erikson Hall, East Lansing, MI, 48824.

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 202 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

**DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT**

Please select a box and sign below.


        Yes, I would like to participate in this research study.

        No, I do not want to participate in this research study.



_____    _____
Signature                                   Date


        Yes, I agree to be audiotaped.

        No, I do NOT agree to be audiotaped.



_____    _____
Signature                                   Date


You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

Appendix G:


Demographic Characteristics of Participants (Overall)

Table 16. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

|  | N | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **School District** |  |  |
| Cedar | 34 | 21.7 |
| Green Meadows | 123 | 78.3 |
| **Gender (%)** |  |  |
| Male | 20 | 12.7 |
| Female | 123 | 78.3 |
| Missing | 14 | 8.9 |
| **Parent Race** |  |  |
| Asian/Asian-American | 4 | 2.5 |
| Black/African-American | 98 | 62.4 |
| White/Caucasian | 43 | 27.4 |
| Hispanic/Hispanic-American | 2 | 1.3 |
| Bi-racial | 4 | 2.5 |
| Other | 3 | 1.9 |
| Missing | 3 | 1.9 |
| **Parent Marital Status** |  |  |
| Married | 54 | 34.4 |
| Single | 80 | 51.0 |
| Separated | 6 | 3.8 |
| Divorced | 14 | 8.9 |
| Missing | 3 | 1.9 |
| **Parent Educational Status** |  |  |
| Less than seventh grade | 3 | 1.9 |
| Middle school | 3 | 1.9 |
| Part of high school | 8 | 5.1 |
| Part of college | 45 | 28.7 |
| 2-year program or vocational school | 43 | 27.4 |
| Bachelor's degree | 22 | 14.0 |
| Master's degree | 29 | 18.5 |
| Higher than Master's | 1 | .6 |
| Missing | 1 | .6 |
| **Parent Age  (*M*)** | 34.40 |  |

Table 16 (cont'd)

|  | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| **Employment Status** | | |
| Unemployed | 58 | 36.9 |
| Irregular Employment | 3 | 1.9 |
| Part Time | 25 | 15.9 |
| Full Time | 69 | 43.9 |
| Missing | 2 | 1.3 |
| **Family Income** | | |
| Less than 5k | 23 | 14.6 |
| 5001-10k | 26 | 16.6 |
| 10001-20k | 28 | 17.8 |
| 20001-30k | 28 | 17.8 |
| 30001-35k | 11 | 7.0 |
| 40001-45k | 8 | 5.1 |
| Over 45k | 4 | 2.5 |
| Missing | 13 | 8.3 |
| **Home Language** | | |
| English | 136 | 86.6 |
| Other | 9 | 5.7 |
| Missing | 12 | 7.6 |
| **Parent Role to Child** | | |
| Biological mother/father | 139 | 88.5 |
| Brother/sister | 4 | 2.5 |
| Grandparent | 7 | 4.5 |
| Aunt/uncle | 1 | .6 |
| Boyfriend/girlfriend of the child's parent | 2 | 1.3 |
| Other | 1 | .6 |
| Missing | 3 | 1.9 |
| **Child Gender** | | |
| Male | 74 | 47.1 |
| Female | 76 | 48.4 |
| Missing | 7 | 4.5 |

Table 16 (cont'd)

|  | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| **Child Grade** | | |
| Kindergarten | 20 | 12.7 |
| 1st | 24 | 15.3 |
| 2nd | 17 | 10.8 |
| 3rd | 30 | 19.1 |
| 4th | 33 | 21.0 |
| 5th | 23 | 14.6 |
| Missing | 10 | 6.4 |
| **Total Family** | | |
| 2 | 10 | 6.4 |
| 3 | 22 | 14.0 |
| 4 | 51 | 32.5 |
| 5 | 32 | 20.4 |
| 6 | 20 | 12.7 |
| 7 | 11 | 7.0 |
| 8 | 4 | 2.5 |
| 9 or more | 4 | 2.5 |
| Missing | 3 | 1.9 |
| **Total Child** | | |
| 1 | 25 | 15.9 |
| 2 | 45 | 28.7 |
| 3 | 39 | 24.8 |
| 4 | 31 | 19.7 |
| 5 | 10 | 6.4 |
| 6 or more | 4 | 2.5 |
| Missing | 3 | 1.9 |

Appendix H:


School-Parent Compact Items (Parent)

Cedar School District

(* within Mulberry Elementary School, but not Cypress Elementary School)

- Monitoring attendance
- Ensuring that homework is completed
- Monitoring the amount of television children watch
- Volunteering in child's classroom
- Participating, as appropriate, in decisions relating to my child's education
- Promoting positive use of my child's extracurricular time
- Staying informed about my child's education and communicating with the school by promptly reading all notices from the school or the school district either received by my child or by mail and responding, as appropriate
- Serving, to the extent possible, on policy advisory groups, such as being the Title 1, Part A parent representative on the school's School Improvement Team, the Title 1 Policy Advisory Committee, the District-wide Policy Advisory Council, the State's Committee of Practitioners, the School Support Team or other school advisory or policy groups
- Making sure students abide by the Districts Uniform Policy*
- Attending School Board Meetings when possible*
- Attending School Wide events*
- Monitor the student's progress using Zangle Parent Connect*
- Identify the school of any changes in address or telephone information*
- Register information on the Honeywell Instant Alert System for notification purposes*

- Strive each day to make my child's education my number one priority.
- See that my child is punctual and attends school regularly.
- Strive to send a well – nourished, well – rested, properly dressed, well – loved child to school each day.
- Establish a time and quiet place for homework and check it regularly.
- Read and review all information my child brings home from school.
- Stay aware of what my child is learning.
- Have ongoing communication with my child's school and teacher.
- Encourage my child to follow all of the school rules and follow up with any signs of misconduct.
- Support the school's discipline plan.

Appendix I:


Demographic Questionnaire

**Please mark the items that best describe you (the person completing the survey).**

**1. Gender (of person completing survey):**  MALE          FEMALE

**2. Parent Race (check one)**
____ Asian/Asian-American or Pacific Islander
____ Black/African-American
____ White/Caucasian

____ Hispanic/Hispanic-American
____ Latino/Latin-American?
____ Bi-racial
____ Other

**3. How old are you?** ____

**4. Parent Marital Status (check one):**
____ Married
____ Single
____ Separated

____ Divorced
____ Widowed

**5. Your Educational Level (please check the highest level completed)**
____ Less than seventh grade
____ Middle school
____ Part of high school ($10^{th}$ or $11^{th}$)
____ High school or GED
____ Part of college (at least 1 year)

____ 2-year program or vocational school
____ Bachelor's degree
____ Master's degree
____ Doctoral degree

**6. Educational Level of your spouse/partner (check the highest level completed)**
____ **I do not have a spouse/partner**
____ Less than seventh grade
____ Middle school
____ Part of high school ($10^{th}$ or $11^{th}$)
____ High school or GED
____ Part of college (at least 1 year)

____ 2-year program or vocational school
____ Bachelor's degree
____ Master's degree
____ Doctoral degree

**7. Employment status (check one):**
____ Unemployed
____ Irregular employment
____ Regular employment

____ Part time
____ Full time

**8. Family income per year (check one):**
____ less than $5,000
____ 5,001-10,000
____ 10,001-20,000
____ 20,001-30,000

____ 30,001-35,000
____ 35,001-40,000
____ 40,001-45,000
____ over 45,000

**9. What language do you (and your family) speak at home?** _____

**10. Role to child (please check one):**

____ Biological mother/father
____ Brother/sister
____ Grandparent
____ Aunt/uncle
____ Cousin
____ Other relative

____ Non-relative (for example, foster parent)
____ Same sex partner of child's parent
____ Boyfriend/girlfriend of the child's parent
_____ Other (please describe):
_____

**11. Gender of child (circle one):**     MALE          FEMALE

**12. Student Grade Level (circle one):**  K    1$^{st}$    2$^{nd}$    3$^{rd}$    4$^{th}$    5$^{th}$

**13. What school district does your child attend? (circle one)**

School District Of The City Of Inkster          Westwood Community Schools

**13. How many total people live in the house? (circle one)**

2        3        4        5        6        7        8        9 or more

**14. How many children under the age of 18 live in your home? (circle one)**

1              2              3              4              5              6 or more

**15. Which job best describes yours? (Pick one)**

___ Unemployed, retired
___ Labor, custodial, maintenance
___ Factory worker, construction
___ Retail sales, customer service
___ Food services, restaurant
___ Driver (taxi, truck, bus, delivery)
___ Hairdresser/Barber
___ Craftsman (plumber, electrician, carpenter, etc.)
___ Bookkeeping, related administrative
___ Clerical worker (e.g., bank teller, dental assistant)
___ Service technician (appliances, computers, cars)

___ Secretary (legal, medical)
___ Real Estate/Insurance Sales
___ Social services, public service, related governmental  (e.g., Teacher, social worker)
___ Accountant, registered nurse
___ School administrator (e.g., Principal, Vice Principal)
___ District manager, executive assistant
___ Professional (e.g., dentist, lawyer, psychologist, university professor, engineer)
___ Other (please name):
_____

**16. Which job best describes your spouse/partner? (pick one)**

___ **I do not have a spouse/partner**
___ Unemployed, retired,
___ Labor, custodial, maintenance
___ Factory worker, construction
___ Retail sales, customer service
___ Food services, restaurant
___ Driver (taxi, truck, bus, delivery)
___ Hairdresser/Barber
___ Craftsman (plumber, electrician, carpenter, etc.)
___ Bookkeeping, related administrative
___ Clerical worker (e.g., bank teller, dental assistant)
___ Service technician (appliances, computers, cars)

___ Secretary (legal, medical)
___ Real Estate/Insurance Sales
___ Social services, public service, related governmental  (e.g., Teacher, social worker)
___ Accountant, registered nurse
___ School administrator (e.g., Principal, Vice Principal)
___ District manager, executive assistant
___ Professional (e.g., dentist, lawyer, psychologist, professor, engineer)
___ Other (please name): _____

Appendix J:


Helping Children in School- Open-Ended Question

**Helping Children in School**

Within some schools, there is often talk about ways that parents help their children to do well in school. However, many people think that there are many different ways to help children do well in school. There is no "right" answer, since every parent has a different relationship with their child and their child's school.

**Please use the blank space below to answer the following question: How do you help your child be successful in school?**

Appendix K:


Parental Engagement Practices Scale

**Parental Involvement Practices Scale: Cedar School District**

**If your child attends elementary school in <u>Green Meadows District</u>, DO NOT complete this section. Please go to the *Parental Involvement Practices Scale: Green Meadows District* section.**

**If your child attends elementary school in <u>Cedar School District</u>, please complete the following:**

**Part 1:** Please indicate HOW OFTEN you did the following activities OVER THE LAST TWO QUARTERS OF THIS SCHOOL YEAR (from SEPTEMBER-JANUAURY). All items in the scale use a six-point response format (never to everyday): 1 = Never; 2 = Rarely (once or twice); 3 = Once a month; 4 = Once a week; 5 = A few times a week; 6 = Everyday.

| | | Never | Rarely (Once or twice) | Once a month | Once a week | A few times a week | Everyday |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I kept track of my child's school attendance. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 2 | I made sure that my child's homework was completed. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 3 | I monitored the amount of television my child watched. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 4 | I volunteered in my child's classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 5 | I participated in decisions related to my child's education. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 6 | I encouraged my child to spend out-of-school time in positive and healthy ways. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

**Part 2**: Please indicate HOW OFTEN you did the following activities OVER THE LAST TWO QUARTERS OF THIS SCHOOL YEAR (from SEPTEMBER-JANUAURY). All items in the scale use a <u>four-point</u> response format (never to every time): 1 = Never; 2 = Rarely; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Every time.

|   |   | **Never** | **Rarely** | **Sometimes** | **Every time** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | I read school and district notices received through my child or in the mail and responded to them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

|   |   | **Never** | **Rarely** | **Sometimes** | **Every time** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | I served on policy advisory groups (for example, serving on the School Improvement Team, Title 1 Policy Advisory Committee, District-wide Policy Advisory Council, State's Committee of Practitioners, School Support Team). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

**Part 3: Please answer the following questions:**

**Many schools have school-parent compacts that describe what schools and parents can or should do to support a child's education.**

Have you heard of the school-parent compact?   YES    NO

Have you seen the school-parent compact?   YES         NO

**Part 4: IF YOUR CHILD GOES TO MULBERRY ELEMENTARY,** please complete the following items as well:

|   |   | **Never** | **Rarely (Once or twice)** | **Once a month** | **Once a week** | **A few times a week** | **Everyday** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9 | I made sure that my child followed the district's uniform policy. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 10 | I kept track of my child's progress using Zangle Parent Connect. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

Please indicate HOW OFTEN you did the following activities OVER THE LAST TWO QUARTERS OF THIS SCHOOL YEAR (from SEPTEMBER-JANUAURY). All items in the scale use a <u>four-point</u> response format (never to every time): 1 = Never; 2 = Rarely; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Every time.

|    |                                                                                                              | **Never** | **Rarely** | **Sometimes** | **Every time** |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|---------------|----------------|
| 11 | I attended School Board Meetings.                                                                             | 1         | 2          | 3             | 4              |
| 12 | I attended School Wide events.                                                                                | 1         | 2          | 3             | 4              |
| 13 | I notified the school of any changes in address or telephone information.                                     | 1         | 2          | 3             | 4              |
| 14 | I registered my contact information on the Honeywell Instant Alert System for notification purposes.          | 1         | 2          | 3             | 4              |

**Parental Involvement Practices Scale: Green Meadows District**

**If your child attends elementary school in <u>Cedar School District</u>, DO NOT complete this section.  Make sure you completed the *Parental Involvement Practices Scale: Cedar School District* section.  Then go to the *About You* section.**

**<u>If your child attends an elementary school in Green Meadows District,</u> please complete the following:**

**Part 1:** Please indicate HOW OFTEN you did the following activities OVER THE LAST TWO QUARTERS OF THIS SCHOOL YEAR (from SEPTEMBER-JANUAURY). All items in the scale use a <u>six-point</u> response format (never to everyday): 1 = Never; 2 = Rarely (once or twice); 3 = Once a month; 4 = Once a week; 5 = A few times a week; 6 = Everyday.

|  |  | Never | Rarely (Once or twice) | Once a month | Once a week | A few times a week | Everyday |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I did everything I could to make my child's education my number one priority. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 2 | I made sure that my child attended school regularly. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 3 | I made sure that my child was on time for school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 4 | I did everything I could to make sure that my child arrived at school well-fed. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 5 | I did everything I could to make sure that my child arrived at school well-rested. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 6 | I did everything I could to make sure that my child was sent to school each morning feeling loved. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

| | | Never | Rarely (Once or twice) | Once a month | Once a week | A few times a week | Everyday |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | I set a specific time for my student to do homework. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 8 | I set up a quiet place for my child to do homework. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 9 | I checked my child's homework. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 10 | I read the information my child brought home from school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 11 | I knew what my child was learning at school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 12 | I communicated with my child's school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 13 | I communicated with my child's teacher. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 14 | I encouraged my child to follow all of the school rules. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 15 | I followed up with any signs of my child's misconduct. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 16 | I supported the discipline plan used at my child's school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

**Part 2: Please answer the following questions:**
**Many schools have school-parent compacts that describe what schools and parents can or should do to support a child's education.**

Have you heard of the school-parent compact?   YES         NO

Have you seen the school-parent compact?   YES     NO

Appendix L:


Parental Role Construction for Involvement in the Child's Education Scale: Role Activity
Beliefs and Valence toward School

**Parental Role Construction for Involvement in the Child's Education Scale**

**Part 1: Role Activity Beliefs**

<u>Instructions</u>

Please indicate how much you AGREE or DISAGREE with each of the following

statements. Please think about <u>the current school year</u> as you consider each statement.

<u>Response format</u>

All items in the scale use a six-point response format (disagree very strongly to agree

very strongly): 1 = Disagree very strongly; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Disagree just a little; 4 =

Agree just a little; 5 = Agree; 6 = Agree very strongly.

<u>Items</u>

I believe it is my responsibility…

1.  …to volunteer at the school

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

2.  …to communicate with my child's teacher regularly.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

3.  …to help my child with homework.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

4. ...make sure the school has what it needs.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

5. ...support decisions made by the teacher.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

6. ...stay on top of things at school.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

7. ...explain tough assignments to my child.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

8. ...talk with other parents from my child's school.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

9. ...make the school better.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

10. ...talk with my child about the school day.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

**Part 2: Valence toward School**

<u>Instructions</u>

People have different feelings about school.  Please <u>mark the number</u> on each line below

that best describes your feelings about <u>your school experiences when you were a student</u>.

<u>Items</u>

My School:                      disliked   1     2     3     4     5     6   liked

My Teachers:           were mean   1     2     3     4     5     6   were nice

My Teachers:            ignored me   1     2     3     4     5     6   cared about me

My school experience:          bad   1     2     3     4     5     6   good

I felt like:                 an outsider   1     2     3     4     5     6   I belonged

My overall experience:       failure   1     2     3     4     5     6   success

Appendix M:


Parental Self-Efficacy for Helping the Child Succeed in School Scale

**Parental Self-Efficacy for Helping the Child Succeed in School Scale**

Instructions to respondent

Please indicate how much you AGREE or DISAGREE with each of the following

statements. Please think about the current school year as you consider each statement.

Response format

All items in the scale use a six-point response format (disagree very strongly to agree

very strongly): 1 = Disagree very strongly; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Disagree just a little; 4 =

Agree just a little; 5 = Agree; 6 = Agree very strongly.

Items

1.  I know how to help my child do well in school.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

2.  I don't know if I'm getting through to my child. (reversed)

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

3.  I don't know how to help my child make good grades in school. (reversed)

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

4.  I feel successful about my efforts to help my child learn.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

5. Other children have more influence on my child's grades than I do. (reversed)

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

6. I don't know how to help my child learn. (reversed)

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

7. I make a significant difference in my child's school performance.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

Appendix N:


Parents' Perceptions of Personal Knowledge and Skills Scale

**Parents' Perceptions of Personal Knowledge and Skills Scale**

<u>Instructions to respondent</u>

Please indicate how much you AGREE or DISAGREE with each of the following

statements with regard to <u>the current school year</u>.

<u>Response format</u>

All items in the scale use a six-point response format (disagree very strongly to agree

very strongly): 1 = Disagree very strongly; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Disagree just a little; 4 =

Agree just a little; 5 = Agree; 6 = Agree very strongly.

<u>Items</u>

1.  I know about volunteering opportunities at my child's school.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

2.  I know about special events at my child's school.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

3.  I know effective ways to contact my child's teacher.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

4.  I know how to communicate effectively with my child about the school day.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

5.  I know how to explain things to my child about his or her homework.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

6.  I know enough about the subjects of my child's homework to help him or her.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

7.  I know how to communicate effectively with my child's teacher.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

8.  I know how to supervise my child's homework.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

9.  I have the skills to help out at my child's school.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

Appendix O:


Parents' Perceptions of Personal Time and Energy Scale

**Parents' Perceptions of Personal Time and Energy Scale**

<u>Instructions to respondent</u>

Please indicate how much you AGREE or DISAGREE with each of the following

statements with regard to <u>the current school year</u>.

<u>Response format</u>

All items in the scale use a six-point response format (disagree very strongly to agree

very strongly): 1 = Disagree very strongly; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Disagree just a little; 4 =

Agree just a little; 5 = Agree; 6 = Agree very strongly.

<u>Items</u>

I have enough time and energy to…

1. … communicate effectively with my child about the school day.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

2. . . .help out at my child's school.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

3. … communicate effectively with my child's teacher.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

4. … attend special events at school.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

5. … help my child with homework.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

6. … supervise my child's homework.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

Appendix P:


Parental Perceptions of General Invitations for Involvement from the School Scale

**Parental Perceptions of General Invitations for Involvement from the School Scale**

Instructions to respondent

Please indicate how much you AGREE or DISAGREE with each of the following

statements. Please think about the current school year as you consider each statement."

Response format

All items in the scale use a six-point response format (disagree very strongly to agree

very strongly): 1 = Disagree very strongly; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Disagree just a little; 4 =

Agree just a little; 5 = Agree; 6 = Agree very strongly.

Items

1. Teachers at this school are interested and cooperative when they discuss my child with

me.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

2. I feel welcome at this school.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

3. Parent activities are scheduled at this school so that I can attend.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

4. This school lets me know about meetings and special school events.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

5. This school's staff contacts me promptly about any problems involving my child.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

6. The teachers at this school keep me informed about my child's progress in school.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree very strongly | Disagree | Disagree just a little | Agree just a little | Agree | Agree very strongly |

Appendix Q:


Parents' Perceptions of Specific Invitations for Involvement from the Teacher Scale

**Parents' Perceptions of Specific Invitations for Involvement from the Teacher**

Instructions to respondent

Please indicate HOW OFTEN the following have happened SINCE THE BEGINNING

OF THIS SCHOOL YEAR.

Response format

All items in the scale use a six-point response format (never to daily): 1 = never; 2 = 1 or

2 times; 3 = 4 or 5 times; 4 = once a week; 5 = a few times a week; 6 = daily.

Items

1. My child's teacher asked me or expected me to help my child with homework.

   1        2         3         4         5         6
Never  1 or 2 times  4 or 5 times  Once a week  A few times a week  Daily

2. My child's teacher asked me or expected me to supervise my child's homework.

   1        2         3         4         5         6
Never  1 or 2 times  4 or 5 times  Once a week  A few times a week  Daily

3. My child's teacher asked me to talk with my child about the school day.

   1        2         3         4         5         6
Never  1 or 2 times  4 or 5 times  Once a week  A few times a week  Daily

4. My child's teacher asked me to attend a special event at school.

   1        2         3         4         5         6
Never  1 or 2 times  4 or 5 times  Once a week  A few times a week  Daily

5. My child's teacher asked me to help out at the school.

   1        2         3         4         5         6
Never  1 or 2 times  4 or 5 times  Once a week  A few times a week  Daily

6.  My child's teacher contacted me (for example, sent a note, phoned, e-mailed).

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Never | 1 or 2 times | 4 or 5 times | Once a week | A few times a week | Daily |

Appendix R:


Parents' Perceptions of Specific Invitations for Involvement from the Child Scale

**Parents' Perceptions of Specific Invitations for Involvement from the Child Scale**

Instructions to respondent

Please indicate HOW OFTEN the following have happened SINCE THE BEGINNING

OF THIS SCHOOL YEAR.

Response format

All items in the scale use a six-point response format (never to daily): 1 = never; 2 = 1 or

2 times; 3 = 4 or 5 times; 4 = once a week; 5 = a few times a week; 6 = daily.

Items

1.  My child asked me to help explain something about his or her homework.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Never | 1 or 2 times | 4 or 5 times | Once a week | A few times a week | Daily |

2.  My child asked me to supervise his or her homework.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Never | 1 or 2 times | 4 or 5 times | Once a week | A few times a week | Daily |

3.  My child talked with me about the school day.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Never | 1 or 2 times | 4 or 5 times | Once a week | A few times a week | Daily |

4.  My child asked me to attend a special event at school.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Never | 1 or 2 times | 4 or 5 times | Once a week | A few times a week | Daily |

5.  My child asked me to help out at the school.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Never | 1 or 2 times | 4 or 5 times | Once a week | A few times a week | Daily |

6. My child asked me talk with his or her teacher.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Never | 1 or 2 times | 4 or 5 times | Once a week | A few times a week | Daily |

Appendix S:


Protocol for Interview

Thank you for agreeing to talk to me today. Within some schools, there is often talk about ways that parents help their children to do well in school. However, many people think that there are many different ways to help children do well in school. I believe that there is no "right" answer, since every parent has a different relationship with their child and their child's school. In order to better understand your opinion, I would like to ask you some questions about your child's school, as well as your thoughts about schools. There are no "right" or "wrong" answer to any of these questions; I just want to know your opinion.

As you answer these questions, I want you to think about the child you were thinking about as you completed the survey.

- To begin with, can you tell me a little bit about your child?
    - What are three adjectives that you would use to describe your child? Why?
    - What does he/she like most about school? Explain.
    - What does he/she like least? Explain.

Now, I'd like to ask you a few questions about your experiences with school

What are three adjectives that you would use to describe yourself when you were in school? Why?

    - How would you describe your time in school?
    - What did you like about school? What did you enjoy?
    - What did you dislike about school? What parts of school did you NOT enjoy?
    - Did your parent (or parents) help you to do well in school? How did they do this?
        - If not your parents, who were the adults in your life who influenced your performance in school? Explain.

Now, I'd like to talk to you about how you help your child in school.

- If someone said they were involved in their child's education, what would that mean to you?  What kinds of things would you assume they were doing?
    - How are you involved in your child's education? Can you give me some examples?
    - Do you think that there are things that you could do to be more involved? Can you give me some examples?
        - What keeps (prevents) you from doing these things?
- Given what you've said about involvement in education, what does it mean when schools and parents work together to help children succeed in school? What does that look like?
- How do you feel that you work together with your child's school? In what ways do you work together?

- In your opinion, how does your child's school invite you to become involved? Who is inviting you? How do they do this?
  - What are some ways that your child's school invites you to become involved in your child's school?
  - What are some ways that your child's teacher invites you to become involved? What kinds of things is s/he asking you to participate in?
  - How does your child ask you to become involved? What kinds of things is s/he asking you to participate in?
- How well do you and the school work together to help your child succeed in school?

At this point, I would like to ask you some questions about the school-parent compact. <SHOW SCHOOL-PARENT COMPACT FOR THE SCHOOL DISTRICT>

- I would like to show you this document. You may have seen this before, but this is a parent-school compact, which is meant to explain what [NAME OF SCHOOL DISTRICT] believes parents and teachers should do in order to help your child do well in school. I would like to talk to you about what's in the compact.
- Have you seen this before?
- <Review the "school" portion of the compact>
  - What do you think about the school portion of the compact?
  - If you could add anything to the compact, what would you add?
  - If you could take out anything in the compact, what would you get rid of?
- <Review the "parent" portion of the compact>
  - What do you think about the "parent" portion of the compact?
  - If you could add anything to the "parent" portion of the compact, what would you add?
  - If you could take out anything in the "parent" portion of the compact, what would you get rid of?
- Is there anything else you would like to talk about today?

Thank you very much for taking the time to talk to me today. If there is something that

you would like to add after our chat, please feel free to contact me at [PROVIDE

PREFERRED CONTACT INFORMATION].

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REFERENCES

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