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The Impact of Academic Parent-Teacher Teams on Family Engagement and Student Academic Achievement

Toni Ferguson
toni.ferguson@students.cau.edu

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ABSTRACT

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

FERGUSON, TONI B.A. SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY, 1998
M.E. SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY, 2000
ED.S. UNIVERSITY OF WEST GEORGIA, 2010

THE IMPACT OF ACADEMIC PARENT-TEACHER TEAMS ON FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND STUDENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Committee Chair: Trevor Turner, Ph.D.

Dissertation dated May 2017

The purpose of this study was to examine teacher and parent perceptions of the impact of a high-family engagement model, Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (APTT). Teacher and parent surveys were administered to determine the relationship between the following variables: teacher leadership, administrative support, parental perceptions of effectiveness of communications, parental perceptions of convenience of scheduling of meetings, parental perceptions of usefulness of meetings, family engagement, and student academic achievement. Data from a Pearson correlation and a regression test were analyzed to determine which variables had the greatest significance on the impact of APTT on family engagement and student academic achievement. Based on the results of the study, parental perception of effectiveness of communications, parental perception of convenience of scheduling of meetings, and parental perception of usefulness of meetings had the greatest significance with family engagement and student
academic achievement. Recommendations were suggested for policy-makers, district leaders, educational leaders, teachers, and future researchers.
THE IMPACT OF ACADEMIC PARENT-TEACHER TEAMS ON FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND STUDENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

BY
TONI FERGUSON

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

MAY 2017
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First and foremost, I give honor and acknowledgement to the head of my life, God the Almighty, for leading me and guiding me through this journey. “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want” (Psalms 23). My heart overflows with thankfulness knowing that God has been with me and has comforted me throughout the completion of my dissertation.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Students matter. Parents matter. Teachers matter. Family is the untapped stakeholder to ensure student success. Student success is the core of school improvement plans. Too often school improvement plans lack parents as an essential component. Parents are valued in American schools as cheerleaders not coaches (Ripley, 2013). Developing a school and home learning partnership will shift the paradigm for parents’ role from cheerleaders to coaches; a shift from parent involvement to family engagement. When schools and families form partnerships, all students experience some level of success. According to Henderson and Mapp (2002), students from engaged families are more likely to:

- earn higher grades and test scores, and enroll in higher-level programs;
- be promoted, pass their classes, and earn credits;
- attend school regularly;
- have better social skills, show improved behavior, and adapt well to school; and
- graduate and go on to postsecondary education.

Arne Duncan, former U.S. Secretary of Education, made the following statement on May 3, 2010:
My vision of family engagement is ambitious…I want to have too many parents demanding excellence in their schools. I want all parents to be real partners in education with their children’s teachers, from cradle to career. In this partnership, students and parents should feel connected – and teachers should feel supported. When parents demand change and better options for their children, they become the real accountability backstop for the educational system. (Family Engagement Connections, 2015, para. 4)

Statement of the Problem

Surprisingly, the 2012 MetLife Survey of the American Teacher reported both teachers and principals across the country constantly identify family engagement as the most challenging aspects of their work (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). There is a desire to work with families; however, teachers and principals lack readiness and capacity to make the partnerships a true reality.

The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships is research based and provides effective family engagement strategies and practices, adult and learning motivation, and leadership development (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). The Dual Capacity – Building Framework components include:

- capacity challenges to support the cultivation of effective home–school partnerships;
- conditions integral to ensure success of family – school partnership initiatives and interventions;
• desired intermediate capacity goals focused on family engagement policies and programs at the federal, state, and local level; and

• capacity–building outcomes for school and program staff and families.

The Dual Capacity–Building Framework provides a structure to address the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Title I, Part A Parental Involvement Requirements through staff development to engage families and removal of barriers to engage all families. Ultimately, staff and parent capacity are developed to implement and sustain home and school relationships.

Moving from involvement with schools to engagement with students’ learning positively impacts student academic achievement (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). The stages from parent involvement to parent engagement are: inform, involve, engage, and empower. The inform stage provides stakeholders with information to assist with understanding the school’s initiatives and issues (Types of Engagement, 2013). This most likely is achieved through newsletters, websites, and open houses. The involve stage seeks to understand the stakeholders concerns (Types of Engagement, 2013). Through workshops, Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) boards/committees, and local school council stakeholders’ concerns are addressed. The engage stage focuses on stakeholders’ ownership of student learning (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). A major barrier to the engage stage is lack of concern of parents’ needs such as times of school meetings. Shared decision making and accountability for the outcomes of those decisions is the empower stage (Types of Engagement, 2013). School leaders successfully empower others by setting clear roles and responsibilities for those making the decisions.
Building family engagement capacity will equip parents and the family with the necessary skills to support students at home. An increase in home learning positively impacts school learning. Home and school learning partnerships are achieved through the implementation of a high-impact family engagement model, such as Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (APTT). APTT is a classroom-based family engagement model that links school and home learning to increase student academic achievement (APTT, 2015). The model will build and maintain parent capacity to support children in achieving academic goals. With successful implementation of APTT, parents become full partners in their child’s education.

The APTT model includes three 75-minute team meetings and one 30-minute individual session where teachers share student performance data, review grade level foundational skills, demonstrate concrete activities that families can do at home, and set 60-day specific, measurable, actionable, realistic, and time-bound (SMART) goals (APTT, 2015). Teachers serve as coaches and mentors to help build parents’ capacity that fosters student success. APTT supplements the traditional parent conferences with whole-group class meetings to allow parents to see their child’s current academic performance with a specific skill in comparison with other students in the classroom. Moreover, parents learn the performance level expectation for the specific skill at each meeting and the end of year.

APTT has positively impacted students’ outcomes in schools across the country. According to Types of Engagement (2013), the following are notable student outcomes:
• In the Creighton School District, Phoenix, AZ, achievement outcomes for students in English language arts increased by 11 percent and mathematics achievement increased by 19% in APTT classrooms. Over 90% of parents attended all APTT meetings;

• In Washington, D.C. schools in the second year of APTT implementation, 11.3% composite growth in English language arts and mathematics compared to 4.8 District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) average. In year one of implementation, growth in English language arts and mathematics was 6.4% compared to 3.8% DCPS average;

• In Stockton, CA, seven School Improvement Grant schools with the APTT program gained between 8 and 38 points, placing them at the very top of most improved schools in the district; and

• In Meadow Community School, in Mapleton School District, Colorado, test scores in English language arts and mathematics were 17% higher for students whose parents attended APTT meetings.

According to Anne Henderson, APTT is identified as a national model for engaging families effectively in education (Family & Community Engagement, 2015). It supports the mindset of using family engagement as an instructional strategy to increase student academic achievement. This instructional strategy is welcomed in Title I schools due to the requirement to build capacity in parents and the staff. Too often schools are not equipped to provide purposeful and meaningful professional development to build, maintain, and sustain family engagement. Implementation of the APTT model provides a
framework for the Title I Parent Instructional Coordinator (PIC) in the local Georgia school to manage and sustain the APTT model, provide appropriate staff development for teachers to effectively plan for each APTT meeting, and facilitate reflection after each meeting (Paredes, 2013). The PIC serves as the lead for implementing the Family Outreach Plan, which includes strategies to promote parent participation in APTT. This plan promotes family engagement, advertises meetings to parents, and fosters school and home learning partnerships. The PIC leverages the parent center in the local Georgia school to generate and supplement foundational grade level skill activities.

According to results from the Creighton School district, utilizing family engagement as an instructional strategy yields the following results: improved social networks, increased teacher leadership, increased father involvement, high attendance at school events, improved efficiency time use, and increased parent empowerment (Paredes, 2010). APTT introduces parents and school staff to a new paradigm for home and school learning partnership which makes a difference in student achievement through family engagement.

The research school had a strong parent involvement program with numerous opportunities in which parents could participate. Though many of the parent activities at the school were based on academics, school leaders were looking for ways to make parent involvement more rigorous, with a targeted focus on student achievement, while fostering a welcoming and inviting school for all parents. The family attendance goal at the research school during for 2014-2015 was 80% for the first meeting and 100% for subsequent meetings. School leaders were encouraged by the number of families who attended the APTT meetings during the year. Data showed that 65% of students had
families attend APTT Meeting #1, over 50% attended APTT Meeting #2, and over 40% attended APTT Meeting #3.

In comparison, previous years, only 10% of families attended Title I Parent Academic Nights. While the Title I Parent Academic Nights provided parents with strategies to use at home with their children, the strategies were more general in nature, and not specific to a foundational grade level skill. Additionally, individual student data was not shared with families making it challenging for them to see the connection between home and school learning.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine teacher and parent perceptions of the impact of a high-family engagement model, Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (APTT), at an elementary school in the metro Atlanta area. Teacher perception impacts the success of APTT. Teacher perception impacts how students, parents, and the school community embrace the model. Teacher perception impacts family engagement. Teachers value the great parent/teacher partnerships being built through APTT but are overwhelmed with the preparation and presentations to parents. Each year at the end of the first quarter of school, an open response survey is administered. The following are highlights about the teachers’ perception of APTT #1.
Table 1

**Teachers’ Perceptions of APTT #1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Perceptions</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Love It!</td>
<td>• APIT is a step in the right direction; education begins at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• APTT is building community in my classroom even if it is a lot of a extra work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tweak/Leave It!</td>
<td>• I know it is beneficial but it is a lot of work on top of everything else that we are doing inside the classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• APTT is a ton of work for the teachers and is incredibly disappointing when the parents don’t show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• More participation at APTT – conferences versus APTT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I can see the value of this program in a school that has a history of low parent/teacher involvement, but our school is not one of those schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• We have spent endless hours planning, testing, retesting, charting, and plotting one skill when I think our time needs to be spent directly teaching our students in all areas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, the teacher feedback indicated concerns about preparation time, lack of parental involvement, and being overwhelmed with presenting to parents; whereas, parent feedback indicates appreciation and excitement about APTT. The following are some parent comments after the inaugural APTT Meeting.

- This is what has been missing;

- Curriculum Night was awesome; it gave my husband and me a great insight on what our child is learning as well as how to help him along the way;
• I hope APTT helps build community and parent involvement.

The research school is a Title I Georgia school. It is home to approximately 765 students with 69% who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. Of the 781 students 38% are Hispanic, 23% are black/African-American, 22% are white, 13% are Asian, and 4% are multiracial; 38% of the students receive English Language services and 13% of the students receive Special Education services. The research school was one of ten Title I schools in the state of Georgia to pilot APTT during the 2014-2015 school year. During the 2015-2016, each of the Cohort 1 Title I schools provided training to implement APTT in one to two schools within their district. The research school facilitated staff development to implement APTT at two other elementary schools in its district. Ten additional Title I Georgia schools/districts, cohort 2, piloted APTT for the 2015-2016 school year.

Implementation of APTT at the research school is closely aligned with the school district’s civic engagement initiative. According to the school district’s website (Civic Engagement, 2014), civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing in our people the knowledge, skills, values, and motivation needed to make that difference. It means enhancing the quality of life in a community through both the political and non-political processes. As the school district’s community continues to change, the district needs to increase stakeholder engagement to build greater understanding and trust, and expand support for our instructional initiatives internally and externally. APTT creates the bridge to connect
schools and families in an effort to focus on student learning that yields academic success.

Leading school change is challenging work. It requires vision. It requires setting the instructional direction. It requires having the right people on the right seat on the bus at the right time (Collins, 2001). The researcher utilized *Leading Change Step-By-Step* by Dr. Jody Spiro to review, reflect on what worked and what did not work, and refine the implementation plan. Dr. Spiro identified eight steps (see Table 2) to follow when leading change. Leading the implementation of APTT forced the researcher to build triple capacity to support family engagement. The school was intentional about building capacity for classroom teachers, support teachers/staff, and parents. During year one, the school did not develop the implementation plan utilizing the eight steps; however, the school will refine the plan utilizing the eight steps as a guide.

Table 2

*Eight Steps to Follow When Leading Change*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1: Determining Your Change Strategy</strong></td>
<td>APTT – Shift from Title I Parent Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Making your plan</em></td>
<td>Nights to connecting school and home learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Staff Development/Family Outreach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overview for teachers, staff, and parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2: Assess Readiness</strong></td>
<td>Overview for teachers, staff, and parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Where you are isn’t necessarily where they are</em></td>
<td>Administer surveys to teachers and parents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 3: Analyze the stakeholders</strong></td>
<td>Conduct teacher, staff, and parent survey after each APTT meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Who cares? Why? And what can they do about it?</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 4: Minimize resistance</strong></td>
<td>Implement components of the staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>While maximizing your tolerance for it</em></td>
<td>development, family outreach, and teacher support plans with fidelity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 5: Secure a small early win</strong></td>
<td>Celebrate after each APTT meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Turning the tide toward the results you want</em></td>
<td>*glow and grow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 6: Engage the key players in planning</strong></td>
<td>Achieving collaboration without disintegration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Achieving collaboration without disintegration</em></td>
<td>Develop professional learning communities to support collaborative planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 7: Scale and sustain the change strategy</strong></td>
<td>Identify teacher leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Or all your effort will be for naught</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 8: Build in ongoing monitoring and course</strong></td>
<td>Review, reflect, and refine the APTT model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Corrections</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking advantage of the changes you will</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encounter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research shows that family engagement equips parents and the family with the necessary skills to support students at home. However, research also indicates:

- Over a **quarter of new teachers** report that they are not prepared to engage families in supporting their children’s education;
Nearly **half of high school principals** report that teachers are not prepared to engage families in supporting their children’s education; and

**Half of teachers** report that parents do not understand the school’s curriculum and are not involved.

The ideal outcome of implementing the APTT model is to equip teachers to lead an APTT meeting with confidence and enthusiasm. The model encourages school leaders to create a family outreach plan to increase the percent of family participation at APTT meetings. Implementation of the APTT model with fidelity will positively impact student achievement. This study included the following variables: (a) family engagement, (b) student academic achievement, (c) teacher leadership, (d) administrative support, (e) parental perception of effectiveness of communications, (f) parental perception of convenience of scheduling of meetings, and (g) parental perception of usefulness of meetings.

**Definition of Variables**

**Administrative Support** is the extent in which to maximize teachers’ skills, potential, and self-reflective abilities. Building teachers’ capacity is supported through professional learning communities, observations, and feedback sessions.

**Family Engagement** is defined as attendance at APTT meetings and parental self-efficacy with foundational grade level skills based on what the teacher is asking parents to do. An instructional strategy designed to assist with increasing student achievement by implementing practice activities at home.
Parental Perceptions of Convenience of Scheduling of Meetings is defined as parents’ willingness to attend APTT meetings - timing of meetings and dates.

Parental Perception of Effectiveness of Communications is defined as Parents’ response to the family outreach plan. Do parents respond to the school newsletter challenges and the teacher invites? How do parents respond to digital versus paper communication?

Parental Perceptions of Usefulness of Meetings is defined as parents’ ability to implement foundational grade level skills at home.

Student Academic Achievement is defined as student growth as indicated by performance on the End of the Year Fountas and Pinnell Reading Assessment.

Teacher Leadership is the teacher’s willingness to implement the APTT model with fidelity and satisfaction with the leadership role. Do teachers believe parents are committed to supporting school learning at home?

**Research Questions**

The following research questions were used to guide the study.

RQ1: Is there a significant relationship between teacher leadership and the impact of APTT on family engagement?

RQ2: Is there a significant relationship between teacher leadership in the APTT model on family engagement and student academic achievement?

RQ3: Is there a significant relationship between administrative support and teacher leadership in the APTT model?
RQ4: Is there a significant relationship between family engagement and student academic achievement?

RQ5: Is there a significant relationship between parental perceptions of effectiveness of communications in the APTT model on family engagement?

RQ6: Is there a significant relationship between parental perceptions of convenience of scheduling of meetings in the APTT model on family engagement?

RQ7: Is there a significant relationship between parental perceptions of usefulness of meetings in the APTT model on family engagement?

RQ8: What is the relationship between parental perceptions of the APTT model and the school culture?

RQ9: What is the relationship between parental perceptions of the APTT model and effective school communication?

RQ10: What is the relationship between parental perceptions of the APTT model and attendance at meetings?

Significance of the Study

This study helps administrators improve and strengthen teacher’s participation in the APTT model. Administrators gain insights to better equip teachers to lead effective APTT Meetings with confidence and enthusiasm. APTT empowers teachers to engage in more academic focused conversations with parents. APTT provides a structure to build positive relationships by communicating with parents on a more regular basis (not just
during conferences) and provide parents with concrete activities to use at home.

Through implementation of APTT, teachers gain confidence in their ability to teach and model strategies for parents.

Teacher and parent surveys were conducted. Student data was analyzed to gain the perspectives of teachers and parents about how APTT influences family engagement. In addition, their perspectives will help to determine if Title I schools across the school district would benefit from implementing this high-impact family engagement model.

**Summary**

Leveraging family engagement as an instructional strategy is an innovative approach to school improvement. The APTT is a high impact family engagement model designed to increase student achievement. It intentionally builds the capacity of teachers and parents to focus on bridging school and home learning.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The intent of this chapter is to review literature related to the independent variables of the study and the dependent variables, family engagement and student academic achievement. Examples of effective promising practices that are connected to family engagement will be highlighted. The literature was reviewed under the following sections: family engagement, student academic achievement, teacher leadership, administrative support, parental perceptions of effectiveness of communications, parental perception of convenience of scheduling of meetings, and parental perception of usefulness of meetings.

Family Engagement

According to David Leonhardt (2014), “Rising inequality is a trend, but it is one that we have helped create and one we can still change” (p. 23). Inequalities in learning occur prior to students entering school. Inequalities in learning are prevalent in out-of-school time. Inequalities in learning exist anywhere and anytime students learn. These inequalities are widening the opportunity and achievement gaps.

Students spend 20% of their time in formal classroom education which leaves 80% of their time to explore and enhance their learning interests in non-school settings (Lopez & Caspe, 2014). How are schools and communities building family capacity to engage children in learning anywhere at anytime? A national educational focus is
building the capacities of parents and families. This national focus will assist parents and families with strategies to help their children learn anywhere, anytime, maximizing the 80% of out-of-school time in an effort to close the opportunity and achievement gaps.

A monitoring report issued in 2008 by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Elementary and Secondary Education found that family engagement was the weakest area of compliance by states (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). According to the Harvard Family Research Project, there is an expanded definition of family engagement – a shared responsibility among families and educators, continuous from birth to young adulthood, and reinforce across multiple learning contexts (Lopez & Capse, 2014). There are three ways by which schools, families, and communities can maximize anywhere, anytime learning: (a) supporting learning anywhere, anytime; (b) connecting children to learning opportunities; and (c) creating learning pathways that last over time.

Building family engagement capacity will equip parents and the family with the necessary skills to support students anywhere, anytime. When family engagement is at high levels from kindergarten through fifth grade, the achievement gap in literacy between children of highly educated and non-highly educated mothers is nonexistent (Lopez & Capse, 2014). These findings overwhelmingly support that efforts to close the opportunity gaps are warranted. Opportunity gaps are closed when schools, families, and communities work together to maximize out-of-school time – anywhere, anytime learning.
Family and Community Outreach Coordinator and Parent University

Boston Public Schools designated a Family and Community Outreach Coordinator (FCOC) at each school to increase family engagement. It was assumed that it was the role of the FCOC to engage families. This led to a lot of disjointed efforts to implement family engagement programs. The Office of Family and Student Engagement (OFSE) quickly recognized that family engagement efforts involved all school staff members. The OFSE and the FCOC would focus their efforts on building capacity of all district employees to engage families. There was a four-pronged approach (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013):

- Build the capacity of parents to become engaged partners in their children’s education;
- Build the capacity of school staff to understand the importance and benefits of family engagement – to build school-wide and individual practice;
- Build the capacity of students to be actively engaged in their own learning; and
- Build the capacity of the district to promote core values of engagement and to develop an accountability system.

Family Resource Centers

Community-based Family Resource Centers (FRC) focused on supporting parents as children’s first teachers (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). FRCs offer parents child enrichment activities, workshops, assistance with health insurance, and courses on topics such as early literacy, nutrition, positive parenting, and parent advocacy. The focus is to ensure
that each parent has the skills to help their child experience success at school. FRCs are centered around collaboration, building trust, and relational skills between families and the school. Parents are empowered to serve in leadership roles to support home learning, to make decisions about student learning, to advocate for their child, and to collaborate with teachers.

According to a statistical analysis there are specific components of family engagement. The analysis focused on which parents communicated with their children about school, whether parents checked their children’s homework, parental expectations for the academic success of their children, whether parents encouraged their children to do outside reading, whether parents attended or participated in school functions, the extent to which there were household rules regarding school and/or leisure activities, parenting style and warmth, and other measures of family engagement (Jeynes, 2003). The analysis indicates that parents reading with students positively impacts academic performance. Family engagement impacts levels of academic performance – GPA, standardized test, and other assessment measures.

High-minority, high-poverty schools need to revisit the type of parental involvement strategies needed to engage families. Schools need to consider their population and determine which strategies will meet the needs of the cultures in the school. Misunderstandings about culture differences can impede family engagement practices (Lopez & Stoelting, 2010).

A parent study was conducted at Patrick O’Hearn Elementary in Boston, MA to gather parental perceptions. Parents were asked: “Why and how are low-income parents involved in their children’s education?” and “What are the factors that influence
involvement?” The study compared the parents’ descriptions of their participation in their children’s education to Epstein’s (1986) six types of involvement – parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and involvement with the community. The study also investigated factors that influenced parents’ involvement in their children’s education. There were five major findings:

1. The 18 parents’ stories support the research that the majority of parents from all races, ethnicities, or socioeconomic status are interested in their children’s education. O’Hearn parents have a desire to do what they could to help their children succeed academically (Mapp, 2002).

2. Parents noticed a difference in their children’s behavior and feelings about school as a result of their involvement at home or at school. This change in their children’s behavior motivated them to continue to support the home and school partnership.

3. The school staff did not recognize all the ways that parents were involved in their children’s education.

4. Social factors originating from the parents’ own experiences and history influence their participation (Mapp, 2002).

5. Relational school factors have a major impact on parents’ involvement. Schools should implement the “joining process” of welcoming, honoring, and connecting with families.
Student Academic Achievement

Family engagement has been identified as a strategy to decrease the achievement gap (Jeynes, 2011). However, schools struggle with how to appropriately support family engagement. Research indicates that parents of children in lower elementary grades have increased communication with teachers and more interactive use of home learning activities which positively impacts student achievement (Epstein, 1986). Parents of children in upper elementary grades have concerns about inadequate training to help their children with reading and math home learning activities.

Miami-Dade County Public Schools implemented The Parent Academy (TPA) in 2005 as an instructional strategy to increase family engagement which would impact student achievement under the leadership of Superintendent Rudy Crews. As Crews reviewed the 2004 student data, he had concerns. The data indicated that less than half of the students’ district-wide met state reading (42%) and math (47%) proficiency standards. There was an achievement gap between Hispanic and African-American students compared to white students. The gap also existed between low-income and high-income students. The graduation rate was 57%, and there were over 50 D or F schools in the district. A strength for the district is that MDCPS had one of the largest (58,000) PTAs in the nation. Crews’ plan was to leverage the district’s strength of parental involvement to increase student achievement.

Crews believed the school system had two types of parents – demand and supply parents. Demand parents understood the school system and supply parents were uninformed, did not understand the system. Crews’ vision was to transform all parents
into demand parents. This transformation would occur through the support of TPA. TPA would offer parents training in three areas (Mapp & Brookover 2010):

- Understanding schools and guiding their children’s education;
- Increasing their own capacity, by extension supporting their children; and
- Employability and certification, to increase parents’ employability options.

In 2006, family learning events were added to TPA. Families were invited to participate in a family fun event and an educational program. These events were advertised, community support was solicited, and mini-parent learning workshops were delivered. The events were successful and parents wanted to learn other ways to help their children succeed. Changes occurred in staff attitudes and in families. More principals viewed parents as intellectual partners. Staff received training on how to create parent-friendly schools. Families were more active partners in their child’s education. Parents and school staff were connecting to ensure success for all students.

**Teacher Leadership**

The 2012 MetLife Survey of the American Teacher reported both teachers and principals across the country constantly identify family engagement as the most challenging aspects of their work (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). There is a desire to work with families; however, teachers and principals lack readiness and capacity to make the partnerships a true reality.

The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships is research based and provides effective family engagement strategies and practices, adult
and learning motivation, and leadership development (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). The Dual Capacity – Building Framework components include:

- capacity challenges to support the cultivation of effective home – school partnerships;
- conditions integral to ensure success of family – school partnership initiatives and interventions;
- desired intermediate capacity goals focused on family engagement policies and programs at the federal, state, and local level; and
- capacity – building outcomes for school and program staff and families.

The Dual Capacity – Building Framework provides a structure to address ESEA, Title I, Part A Parental Involvement Requirements through staff development to engage families and removal of barriers to engage all families. Ultimately staff and parent capacity is developed to implement and sustain home and school relationships.

Some teachers do not have the capacity to involve parents. Many prefer traditional involvement activities such as bake sales and attending class performances. They do not see active forms of family engagement such as decision making as useful. Lack of time for meaningful family engagement participation and low commitment from parents or parental skills at times prevent teachers from involving parents (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Brissie, 1987). Some teachers may fear that involving parents invites parents the option to question their professional knowledge or create a platform for the blame game for children’s academic and/or social problems.
Teacher efficacy is the teacher’s belief about (a) their effect, (b) that the children they teach can learn, and (c) professional learning is available to build their capacity (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1987). Teacher efficacy is a critical variable in effective family engagement activities (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991). Having high-efficacy teachers and parents is a great partnership for successful family engagement activities. With increased confidence, teachers will collaboratively discuss their curriculum and goals with parents with the charge to increase student achievement. This collaborative partnership will minimize the negative image about schools involving families. When teachers view themselves and their students as effective, they are more likely to encourage family engagement. According to Epstein (1984), when teachers solicit parent help consistently, parents believe they should help at home.

Teachers providing instruction to parents to enable them to successfully work with students at home is considered by many educators to be above and beyond the work they were hired to do. Additionally, many teachers feel inadequate to partner with parents and provide this instruction to adults. For this work to be successful, the teacher must plan, select, and develop appropriate home learning activities/materials. In addition, the teacher must select easy to implement home learning activity directions to teach to parents, monitor student progress, and evaluate impact of the activities. Supervision of home learning activities may be the most educationally significant (Becker & Epstein, 1982). Teachers should be intentional to select home learning activities that may include all families.

Oftentimes, teachers are frustrated when parents do attend family engagement events. This frustration may occur due to the time teachers spend preparing for the
events. This frustration impacts the teachers’ attitudes towards family engagement (Bower & Griffin, 2011). This frustration also impacts the level of commitment to developing useful home learning activities. Teachers may not devote a lot of time and effort to contacting families to come to family engagement events. This lack of time and effort to engage families is influenced by parents’ lack of attendance at the events.

According to a Maryland research sample, teacher leadership is measured by (a) teachers’ reputations as leaders in parent involvement, (b) parents’ consensus that the teacher frequently uses the 12 techniques of parent involvement, and (c) parents’ consensus that the teacher regularly communicates with parents by note, phone, conference, etc. (Epstein, 1986). Teacher leaders solicit parents to implement home learning activities frequently. Teacher leaders are diligent in involving all parents regardless of educational backgrounds. Parents feel they must help when teachers constantly seek their assistance.

An effective teacher education program that builds the capacity of teachers to work with families in an effort to increase student achievement includes the following considerations (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991):

1. Motivate teachers to participate in family engagement activities. Have successful teachers share their family engagement stories – benefits, the programs, and student achievement;
2. Teach teachers techniques to involve families;
3. Attend to teacher efficacy – their attitudes and beliefs;
4. Vary family engagement professional learning according to age/grade level of novice to veteran teachers;
5. Move from traditional to non-traditional forms of family engagement;
6. Include practical family engagement activities as field experiences for preservice teachers;
7. Develop ongoing professional learning and administrative support for implementing family engagement activities;
8. Revise state certification exams to reflect family engagement knowledge and application;
9. Create a network for teacher education institutions or programs; and
10. Continue research on family engagement.

**Administrative Support**

Schools of yesterday kept the community in the dark about what happens within the school building. School leaders and teachers express an interest in having parents involved with academics, but little practice of true involvement is documented. There are two reasons for the interest: (a) family engagement in schools represents the democratic assumption that supports the organization of the U.S. school system and (b) increasing family engagement in schools can lead to increases in academic performance (Gordon & Louis, 2009). In recent decades, school leaders have implemented participatory democratic framework to increase active family engagement in school decision making. There is a history of tension between the teacher professionalism movement and the proponents of greater family engagement in decision making (Gordon & Louis, 2009). This tension has limited external stakeholder involvement in school governance structures. With the school governance structure, parents have the opportunity to explore
the issue of teaching and learning. The school leadership team is intentional with creating diversity among the family involvement committee. Implementation of a family involvement committee provides an avenue for the principal to hear the voices of a diverse group of parents.

By focusing on the children and their learning, school leaders have common goals and objectives to connect with parents. Welcoming, honoring, and connecting encourage active at-home and at-school involvement and foster partnership relationships between the school and families. According to Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn, et al. (2009), this participatory management leadership approach provides the structure to withstand questions, conflicts, debates, and disagreements. It also provides structures and processes to solve problems.

As effective partnerships between the school and families are created, a school culture that values and works diligently to form relationships with families are developed. Relationships and trust factors are important influences on parents’ involvement. In addition, the principal must be a committed, supportive and active leader to create and sustain a school culture that embraces participation from all families (Mapp, 2002). The Family Coordinator which is similar to the Parent Instructional Coordinator in the study school district should not serve as the “lone ranger” to organize the entire family involvement initiative. This approach does not provide sustainability and buy-in from the school staff. Success of family involvement initiatives requires support from the school leadership and staff (Mapp, 2002).

Formalized and centralized schools report limited family engagement. The principal’s support of dual capacity for teachers and parents has a direct impact on the
success of family engagement. Building teacher capacity also increases their efficacy. Increased teacher efficacy creates a high efficacy school. High efficacy schools promote and sustain high family engagement. Principals with the viewpoint of their teachers as high in efficacy display this belief to both the teachers and parents which fosters positive perceptions and expectations for family engagement.

The teacher and principal partnership is critical to ensure development of a sound family engagement model to support school and home learning. Empowering teachers to identify specific skills at each grade level or subject area for parents to support at home requires high teacher efficacy. Principals should be intentional with recognizing this type of work as exemplary – above and beyond classroom teaching. This type work should be supported at high levels.

The principal creates a school environment that supports family involvement. More research is needed to study the knowledge of principals who lead schools with cultures that embrace family involvement. Principals should have a vision and a plan which creates balance between family fun and learning events scheduled throughout the school year to increase family engagement and student learning. School leaders should also be careful not to limit parental recognition to school directed activities and overlook ways that families from diverse backgrounds are involved in their children’s education (Mapp, 2002). The focus should be on providing a variety of options for involvement to increase parents’ participation. The most important finding is how much of a role school factors play in influencing parents’ involvement. There should be an intentional effort to join with families to create an environment to diminish parents’ past negative school experiences. The partnership work builds capacity for the parents and the school staff.
Parents feel like important contributors, their efficacy and their sense of confidence is increased, and they are able to help their child.

School leaders who focus on empowering others are committed to building capacity. Empowering others is to give permission to share power. Empowerment creates a team of thought partners that are facilitated by the principal to make defensible decisions and to clarify those decisions (Leithwood & Prestine, 2002). This team of thought partners share power and decision making in an effort to increase a sense of ownership of the decisions and the results. Facilitative leaders tend to have stronger and more influential teacher and parent leaders (Goldring & Sims, 2005). Principals who are perceived as honest, communicative, participatory, collegial, and supportive create a culture of authentic deliberation. In contrast, principals who are perceived as controlling create a culture of avoidance, defensiveness, and self-protection (Anderson, 1998). Instructional focused principals are more effective in achieving family engagement in lower socioeconomic status school communities (Griffith, 2001).

**Parental Perceptions of Effectiveness of Communications**

Most communication to parents is one way. The communication is often parent information – note from the teacher, letter about special events, or report card grades. Schools typically require teacher-parent conferences with all parents, with some parents, or with parents who request a conference. Whatever the communication from school to home, some parents receive limited communications from teachers (Epstein, 1986). Parents see teachers who welcome family engagement as exemplary teachers.
Clear communication is the key to effective partnerships. Schools should accommodate diverse languages, cultural needs, lifestyles and schedules of all families. Information must be clear and easily understandable, in the languages the school’s community uses. Multiple ways of communication such as newsletters, e-mails, phone calls, websites, class meetings, and texts should be used to ensure the greatest possible dissemination. Schools that implement direct personal communication and regular efforts to engage all families have improved student achievement (Cary, 2006).

Communication is a bidirectional endeavor that schools should leverage to create a place for parent ownership within the school through shared decision making (Bower & Griffin, 2011). Empowering parents to have a voice within the school has its limitations. The school is expected to inform parents of effective strategies within the home (Epstein et al., 2009). In addition, the school defines and creates the decision-making process for parents which may limit full parent ownership.

The role of the school and teacher tends to be respected by Latino families. If problems arise, Latino families are less likely to contact the school, especially if English is not the primary language (Gaetano, 2007). Providing translation and interpretation services will support family engagement and collaboration. Developing parent leaders to serve as translators and interpreters creates a school culture of trust among parents. This trust will develop parent leaders to serve as ambassadors in the school community (Galindo & Medina, 2009).

Teachers visiting parents in their homes on a regular basis to obtain information creates an inviting school environment. In addition, teachers calling parents to remind
and invite them to parent-teacher meetings and conferences establishes a regular routine for communication. Communication is often a source of frustration for teachers.

**Parental Perceptions of Convenience of Scheduling of Meetings**

Flexibility is essential for schools to consider when scheduling meetings and conferences to meet parents’ needs and schedules. Parents and principals cite lack of time as the most common barrier to increased engagement; however, research indicates lack of planning for partnerships and lack of mutual understanding as the two greatest barriers to family engagement (Cary, 2006). Other possible barriers are previous negative experiences with schools, language and cultural differences, absence of invitations to parents from the school for family engagement and child care restraints.

Poverty is another barrier to family engagement. Work schedules, lack of transportation, and lack of child care may prevent families from attending family school events or volunteering at school (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Families from lower socioeconomic backgrounds demonstrate their involvement in ways that may be viewed as obtrusive by schools and teachers (Fields-Smith, 2007). Schools and teachers that view unscheduled school visits and informal conversations as obtrusive tend to alienate families. Middle class families also alienate other families due to their perception of the families’ lack of family engagement and lack of care or concern about their children (Kroeger, 2007).

**The Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project**

The goal of home visits is to build relationships of trust and respect between the home and the school. Through these visits educators have time to visit the
neighborhoods in which they serve and listen to community members’ perspectives. In addition, the purpose of these visits is to build the capacity of the educators and families to support the academic and social success of each student.

In the summer of 2011 Stanton Elementary in Washington, D.C. implemented home visits. Implementation of home visits positively impacted the school climate and community and communication relations (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Educators exercised relational leadership to deliberately plan to get to know their parents. Parents were asked about their hopes and dreams for their children. They are also asked to share their children’s strengths and possible challenges. This information is used to help create a warm and inviting school environment where parents and teachers can support student learning. By the end of the 2012 school year, Stanton increased their math scores by more than 18 percentage points and reading by more than 9 percentage points.

In 2009, Boston Public Schools launched Parent University, a capacity-building initiative that serves as a national model. The Office of Family Engagement (OFSE) noticed a need for new and innovative efforts to build school and district capacity. To build teacher capacity, the OFSE collaborated with the Office of Curriculum and Instruction to design professional development on family engagement. To build whole-school capacity, the OFSE focused on “high-impact” strategies which include the following criteria (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013):

- Target a specific grade level or group of students;
- Focus on the mastery of a specific task;
- Provide a specific role for families to play in the mastery of that task; and
• Involve two-way communication between home and school around task mastery.

The OFSE viewed family engagement as an untapped initiative to improving student achievement. This would require the Family and Community Outreach Coordinator (FCOC) to serve as the family engagement coach and champion family engagement efforts at the local school. To champion this work, the FCOC would need to build relationships with all stakeholders in and outside of the school – a shared responsibility.

How can schools be creative and innovative when scheduling parental involvement events? According to No Child Left Behind (NCLB) 2001, schools are required to get parents involved in their child’s education. Title I schools receive federal funds to implement family engagement activities in an effort to close the achievement gap among economically disadvantaged children and other children.

Schools often struggle with low attendance at parent nights and a lack of strategies to provide to families to increase engagement (Glasgow & Whitney, 2009). In a case study in a high-minority, high-poverty elementary school, parents regularly attended school events addressing academic topics; however, attendance at Parent Teacher Organization meetings and informal open houses was extremely low (Bower & Griffin, 2011). A study of parents from three inner-city elementary schools indicates that teachers regularly inform parents about student behavior. The study also reports that teachers are easy to talk to and provide helpful information. However, the study indicates teachers infrequently encourage parents to attend meetings or events at school. It also
reports that teachers seldom provide specific suggestions to parents to help their child do better in school (Patrikakou & Weissberg, 1998).

**Parental Perceptions of Usefulness of Meetings**

In a Maryland research, eighty percent of parents would spend more time assisting their children at home if teachers demonstrated specific directions on how to do home learning activities (Epstein, 1986). Parents’ confidence in schools is increased when they understand the curriculum, can implement home learning activities, and request adjustments to improve home learning activities. Home learning activities should address skills based on student needs, serve as review and practice, or provide extending learning.

Parents perceive information received from teachers useful when it’s presented the following two ways. One way is to invite parents to ask questions and contribute thoughts and/or ideas. Another way is to value parents’ time and to create an avenue to hear their voices. Family Outreach Programs focus on building relationships with parents who are disengaged. To engage parents, Family Outreach volunteers make face-to-face contact. Face-to-face contact builds trust with parents and encourages them to go the school. Implementation of a family outreach program provides the principal with the tools to engage parents. As parents come to the school, a space is needed to help them feel welcome and to discuss social and educational topics. This space provides that “feels like family” school environment that fosters a partnership between the school and families.
Parent groups are another approach to help families feel welcomed in the school and to engage families in the learning process. Parent groups are a strategy that has been successful with African-American families. Parents obtain information about the school, advocate for students as a parent group, and form support networks with other families (Martinez-Cosio, 2010). Relationship building, advocacy, and parental efficacy are practices that effectively work with increasing engagement with African-American, Latino, and low-income families (Martinez-Cosio, 2010).

Principals who see parents as equal partners engage parents in the ownership of the school process (Giles, 2006). Transformational leaders build capacity by actively involving parents in activities that directly impact student learning. Collaboration among the school, teachers, and parents generates a sense of purpose of family engagement activities and the importance of implementing the activities at home. Often times, parents do not know how to be involved in their children’s education (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). The role of the district and school is to inform families and provide direction to parents on how to become involved. There is a lack of policies and programs to equip families with meaningful engagement (Kruse & Louis, 2009).

Schools should provide parents with multiple home learning activities to increase meaningful engagement in student academic achievement. Teachers should provide parents with the training to effectively implement these home learning activities (Bower & Griffin, 2011). Shifting parents focus from traditional parent involvement to educational partnerships impacts academic achievement. As parents are engaged in supporting meaningful homework, home learning activities, and bidirectional
communication, dual capacity for family engagement becomes a reality (Bower & Griffin, 2011).

**Summary**

Family engagement positively affects the student academic achievement of children no matter what the ethnic background is of the children being studied (Mau, 1997; Sanders, 1998; Villas-Boas, 1998). The charge for schools is – how are we guiding parents to be involved? High levels of family engagement are achieved when parents have chosen a particular school for their child (Buach & Goldring, 1995). The charge for schools is – how do we create an inviting and welcoming school that facilitates high levels of family engagement where parents are proud of the school their child attends?
CHAPTER III
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Family structure is a prominent indicator of potential family engagement (Jeynes, 2011). Unfortunately, as the structure of the American family changes, family engagement suffers a decline. Research supports the theory, that many, if not most, Latino and African-American children will come from single parent homes. As a result, research implies that there will be less of a partnership between parents and the school in these homes. On the contrary, research provides that Asian children are the least likely to come from a single parent home and assumes that there will be more of a partnership between parents and the school in those homes.

Family engagement is the topic of conversation in almost every education arena – university and college education preparation programs, principal preparation programs, and state and national government educational reform committees. Increased family engagement significantly impacts toward the academic achievement improvement of children (Hara, 1998). The following variables were examined to explain variation in the dependent variables family engagement and student academic achievement: (a) teacher leadership, (b) administrative support, (c) parental perception of effectiveness of communications, (d) parental perception of convenience of scheduling of meetings, and (e) parental perception of the usefulness of meetings.
The theoretical framework of this study is supported by Douglas McGregor’s Theory X and Theory Y (see Figure 1). Theory X assumes employees need to be monitored and supervised closely. Shared leadership and decision-making is not fostered. Leaders who rely on Theory X create a school environment that lacks trust and teamwork. Rewards and punishment are utilized to motivate teachers generating poor school results. Leaders who use Theory Y are committed to developing others and produce better results (Chapman, 2016). Shared leadership and decision making is the norm. Interdependent teams are facilitated to focus on teaching and learning for all students. Through continuous improvement, the school community works together to build the capacity of the entire school staff. APTT invites administrators, teachers, and parents to work together as interdependent teams focused on a common goal – to increase student academic achievement.

*Figure 1.* McGregor’s Theory X and Theory Y.
Another theory demonstrated in this study is Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (see Figure 2). Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs reflects low-income parents’ concern for meeting their children’s basic needs first and their hopes that school programs will help their children succeed academically. Low-income parents at Title I schools are more likely to be concerned with putting food on the table or a roof over their children’s head. Allowing time to talk to their children about school learning at home is often secondary. It is a challenge for some low-income parents to focus on reading with their children or to help their children with academic practice activities at home (Carter, 2013). Parents play a vital role in keeping kids safe and engaged in the learning process. Implementing APTT builds capacity for teachers and parents to work together to engage students in the learning process in an effort to increase student achievement.

*Figure 2.* Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs.
Definition of Variables

Dependent Variables

**Family Engagement** is defined as attendance at APTT meetings and parental self-efficacy with foundational grade level skills based on what the teacher is asking parents to do. An instructional strategy designed to assist with increasing student achievement by implementing practice activities at home.

**Student Academic Achievement** is defined as a student’s growth which is indicated by their performance on the End of the Year Fountas and Pinnell Reading Assessment.

Independent Variables

**Administrative Support** is the extent in which the principal and assistant principals maximize teachers’ skills, potential, and self-reflective abilities. Building teachers’ capacity is supported through professional learning communities, observations, and feedback sessions.

**Parental Perceptions of Convenience of Scheduling of Meetings** is defined as parents’ willingness to attend APTT meetings - timing of meetings and dates.

**Parental Perceptions of Effectiveness of Communications** is defined as Parents’ response to the family outreach plan. Do parents respond to the school newsletter challenges and the teacher invites? How do parents respond to digital versus paper communication?
**Parental Perceptions of Usefulness of Meetings** is defined as parents’ ability to implement foundational grade level skills at home. (*Respondents must recognize terminology in the survey such as PLCs.*)

**Teacher Leadership** is the teacher’s willingness to implement the APTT model with fidelity and satisfaction with the leadership role. Do teachers believe parents are committed to supporting school learning at home?

### Definition of Terms

**Academic Parent Teacher Teams (APTT)** is a family engagement model which is classroom-based, teacher-led, and data-driven. Its innovative design is rooted in training families to support children’s academic goals by linking home and school learning in an effort to increase student academic achievement.

**ClassDojo** is a communication application for the classroom to connect teachers, families, and students. Connections are made through sending instant private messages, sharing classroom experiences through photos and videos, and monitoring behavior management throughout the school day to create a positive classroom culture. Parents can translate messages into any language (ClassDojo, 2016).

**Effective Communication** is defined as regular efforts of direct communication in multiple ways such as newsletters, e-mails, phone calls, websites, class meetings, and texts to ensure the greatest possible dissemination of a message.

Figure 3 is a diagrammatic representation of the study.
**Independent Variables**

- Teacher Leadership
- Administrative support
- Parental perception of effectiveness of communications
- Parental perception of convenience of scheduling of meetings
- Parental perception of usefulness of meetings

**Dependent Variables**

- Family Engagement
- Student Academic Achievement

*Figure 3.* Diagrammatic representation of the study.

**Justification of the Variables**

Teacher leadership and commitment to implementing APTT with fidelity positively impacts family engagement and student academic achievement. Teacher leaders value the importance of involving families in the learning process. Teacher leaders partner with families to discuss academic goals and provide at-home practice materials in an effort to achieve the goals. Parents seek guidance from teachers on how to best support students at home. Supervision of home learning activities may be the most educationally significant (Becker & Epstein, 1982). Through the APTT model teacher leaders develop relationships with parents and empower them to continue
learning at home. This empowerment increases family engagement and student academic achievement.

Teacher leadership and administrative support are critical to ensure successful implementation of APTT. Building teachers’ capacity to teach parents how to facilitate home learning is exemplary work – above and beyond classroom teaching (Becker & Epstein, 1982). This exemplary work should be recognized regularly by school leaders and strategic professional learning should be provided for teachers. School leaders must provide professional learning to build capacity for staff, teachers, and parents. Building capacity promotes the understanding of APTT and the importance of its implementation to foster positive family/school partnerships.

Parental perception of effectiveness of communications impacts participation in APTT meetings. Often times, parents view communication from school to home as limited from teachers (Epstein, 1986). Teachers’ communication from school to home may be limited due to frustration with parents with low-achieving students (Dembo & Gibson, 1985). Parents see teachers who welcome communication from school to home as great teachers. Parents see these teachers as leaders. Parents see these teachers as leaders who invite family engagement.

Parental perception of effectiveness of convenience of scheduling meetings also impacts participation in APTT meetings. Research indicates that parents and principals cite lack of time as the most common barrier to increased family engagement (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989). In addition, research also states that lack of mutual understanding is a barrier to family engagement.
To bridge the gap between understanding and maximizing time, schools implement home visits. Home visits positively impact the school climate, school community, and communication relations (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Schools that implement home visit intentionally get to know their parents in an effort to create a warm and inviting school environment. This type of environment welcomes parents into the school and gets them involved in academic focused meetings such as APTT meetings.

Parental perception of usefulness of meetings impacts APTT “buy-in.” Eighty percent of parents would spend more time implementing home learning activities if teachers demonstrated specific directions on how to implement them (Epstein, 1986). Parents need to understand the curriculum to implement the home learning activities which will increase APTT “buy-in.” Home learning activities should address skills based on the curriculum and students’ individual academic needs.

The study supports the idea that teacher leadership and administrative support in the APTT model increases family engagement and student academic achievement. In addition, the study indicates that parental perception of effectiveness of communications, parental perception of convenience of scheduling meetings, and parental perception of usefulness of meetings in the APTT model increases family engagement.

**Research Questions**

RQ1: Is there a significant relationship between teacher leadership and the impact of APTT on family engagement?

RQ2: Is there a significant relationship between teacher leadership in the APTT model on family engagement and student academic achievement?
RQ3: Is there a significant relationship between administrative support and teacher leadership in the APTT model?

RQ4: Is there a significant relationship between family engagement and student academic achievement?

RQ5: Is there a significant relationship between parental perceptions of effectiveness of communications in the APTT model on family engagement?

RQ6: Is there a significant relationship between parental perceptions of convenience of scheduling of meetings in the APTT model on family engagement?

RQ7: Is there a significant relationship between parental perceptions of usefulness of meetings in the APTT model on family engagement?

RQ8: What is the significant relationship between parental perceptions of the APTT model and the school culture?

RQ9: What is the relationship between parental perceptions of the APTT model and effective school communication?

RQ10: What is the relationship between parental perceptions of the APTT model and attendance at meetings?

Summary

This study introduces administrators to another instructional strategy to assist with increasing student achievement. The instructional strategy, family engagement, creates positive partnerships among administrators, teachers, and parents to support
student learning. Through APTT, teachers are empowered to support families and give them the necessary tools to facilitate home learning.
CHAPTER IV
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design was a mixed-methods case study to examine teacher and parent perceptions of the impact of a high-impact family engagement model, APTT, at an elementary school in the metro Atlanta area. It further explored the impact of APTT on student academic achievement. A quantitative and qualitative design was selected to conduct a case study confined to one school to complete a program evaluation. Quantitative data was collected from teacher and parent surveys to explain the impact of Academic Parent Teacher teams on family engagement and student academic achievement. Fountas and Pinnell reading levels were reviewed to determine student academic achievement (Fountas & Pinnell, 2011). In addition, qualitative data was collected from ten parents to give a more in depth perception of APTT and how it is operating.

Setting

The study took place at an elementary school in the metro Atlanta area serving students in kindergarten through fifth grade. The school was established in 1975. The 2015-2016 school accountability report indicated that about 781 students attend the school. The school is Title I with 67% of the students receiving free or reduced lunch. The student population is diverse. The demographics include 38% Hispanic, 23%
black/African American, 22% white, 13% Asian, and 4% multiracial. Table 3 shows the historical student enrollment demographics.

Table 3

**Historical Student Enrollment Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>School Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+American Indian/Alaskan Native*</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+Asian*</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+Black/African-American*</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+Hispanic or Latino, any race</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+Multiracial, two or more races*</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander*</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+White*</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESOL</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free/Reduced Lunch</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Attendance</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Not Hispanic or Latino

The school community shares in the commitment of providing rigorous and high quality instruction to meet the needs of every child. The faculty and staff are dedicated educators who partner with parents to ensure high student achievement for each student. Through APTT, teachers train families to support students’ academic goals by linking
home and school learning. Thirty-seven out of 56 certified staff members had advance degrees (see Figure 4).

![Figure 4. Demographics of staff certification level.]

Forty-three out of 56 staff members had 11 or more years of experience (see Figure 5). The administration team consists of one principal and two assistant principals. The school was a Georgia Department of Education Highest-Performing Title I Reward in 2012, 2013, and 2014. The award honors high-performing schools among the top 5% of Title I schools in Georgia with the highest performance of three years for the “all students” group on statewide assessment.

![Figure 5. Experience in education.]

The state of Georgia measures school effectiveness utilizing the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI). The index measures progress on content mastery, student attendance, and preparation for the next school level. Its overall goal is to measure the school’s effect—how is the school preparing students for college and careers. Figure 6 provides a graphic representation of CCRPI scores for all elementary schools in Georgia, adjusting for the level of economic diversity at the school. The scores are plotted against a percentile rank for the free-and-reduced-lunch population (FRL Percentile), a measure of poverty. The graph indicates the research school (large black dot) and all the other schools in its district (maroon dots). According to the 2015-2016 school accountability report, the research school in 2014 was above the line performing academically higher than expected. Schools below the line performed academically lower than expected.

Figure 6. College and career readiness performance index score.
Population and Sample for the Study

The population was based on the students, teachers, and parents at the research school. The sample consisted of 29 classrooms in grades 1-5. In each of the 29 classrooms, the Fountas and Pinnell (2011) reading levels were reviewed to sample the student academic achievement. Approximately 203 parents completed the survey with at least 25 parents representing each grade level. Ten parents were selected to participate in the parent focus group. There were five to represent kindergarten through second grade and five parents to represent third through fifth grade, with a parent representative for each grade level.

Working with Human Subjects

The researcher received permission from Clark Atlanta University and the school district to complete the study. Potential participants had the right to provide consent. Teachers and parents were given a letter containing a confidentiality statement and the purpose of the study.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

Data on dependent variables were collected by administering a family engagement survey to parents. Data on student academic achievement were collected through a review of the Fountas and Pinnell reading levels by grade level. The researcher created a survey to collect data on teacher related variables. The researcher created a survey to determine parents’ perception of effectiveness of communication, scheduling of meetings, and usefulness of meetings. A focus group-interview of ten parents was
conducted to gain a more in depth perception of APTT and how it is operating (see Table 4).

Table 4

Alignment of Variables and Data Instrumentation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Data Instrumentation</th>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Engagement</td>
<td>Teacher Survey; Parent Survey</td>
<td>1-3; 1-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Academic Achievement</td>
<td>Document review of school records</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Leadership</td>
<td>Teacher Survey</td>
<td>4-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Support</td>
<td>Teacher Survey</td>
<td>6-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Perception of Effectiveness</td>
<td>Parent Survey; Parent Interview</td>
<td>10-12; 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>Parent Survey; Parent Interview</td>
<td>13-15; 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Perception of Convenience of Scheduling Meetings</td>
<td>Parent Survey; Parent Interview</td>
<td>16-22; 1-7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection Procedures

Paper and pencil surveys were administered to all teachers in grades 1-5 by the researcher. Technology was utilized to administer the parent survey. Parents were invited to complete the survey in multiple ways, via ClassDojo (2016) messages from the teacher, via e-mails from the school, on an IPad at the school, or on a paper copy at the school. The survey was offered to all parents, approximately 600 parents, in grades 1-5. The parents were asked to identify their child’s grade placement. From that grade identification, it was determined that at least 25 parents per grade level completed the survey. A focus group of 10 parents with at least one from each grade level was selected
for an in depth interview regarding their perception of the usefulness of the APTT model. Parents serving on the focus group were inclusive of parents attending all or some of the meetings to gain a better understanding of parent perceptions of APTT. The researcher reviewed the Fountas and Pinnell reading levels to determine student academic achievement.

**Limitations of the Study**

There are certain areas beyond the researcher’s control throughout a study. This study was confined to one school so it is not generalizability to other schools. Teachers and parents self-reported so the results may be skewed. The researcher is an administrator in the school so this may influence some teacher responses. The ethnicity percentages of the parent survey respondents were disproportional when compared to the student ethnicity enrollment numbers. The majority of the parent respondents were married, Caucasian females between the ages of 41-45 years old. Other variables related to school and family that could impact student academic achievement and family engagement are not included in this study.

**Summary**

Through a mixed-methods case study, data were collected to determine if selected variables increase family engagement and student academic achievement. The research design was targeted at determining the effects of administrative support and teacher effect on selected parental perception variables.
CHAPTER V
ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The purpose of this study was to examine teacher and parent perceptions of the impact of a high-family engagement model, Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (APTT), at an elementary school in the metro Atlanta area. The researcher utilized a mixed-methods case study to examine teacher and parent perceptions of the impact of APTT, a high-impact family engagement model. Quantitative data were collected from teacher and parent surveys to determine relationships between the variables and to answer the research questions. Data from student test scores and reading levels were analyzed to identify relationships between variables and student achievement. Qualitative data were collected to give a more in-depth perception of APTT and how it is operating.

Teachers were administered a survey instrument that assessed their perception of the impact of teacher leadership and administrative support on APTT. All classroom teachers in grades 1-5 completed the paper and pencil survey. Parents completed an online survey that assessed their perception of effectiveness of communications, convenience of scheduling of meetings, usefulness of meetings and the APTT model. Two hundred three parents completed the survey. Ten parents also participated in a focus group survey to answer questions about the APTT model. The following figures reveal the demographic information for parents who completed the survey.
Figure 7 illustrates the age range of parent respondents. The average age of the parents who completed the survey ranges between 31–45 years old. It is noted in Figure 7 that 30.7% of the parents were 36-40 years old, 23.4% of the parents were 41-45 years old, and 19.8% of the parents were 31-35 years old.

![Age Range of Parent Respondents](image)

*Figure 7. Age range of parent respondents (n = 192).*

Figure 8 illustrates the ethnicity of parent respondents. The ethnicity percentages of the parent survey respondents were disproportional when compared to the student ethnicity percentages during the 2015-2016 school year. The percentage of Asian student enrollment was 13% compared to 20.2% parent respondents. The Hispanic student enrollment was 38% compared to 27.3% parent respondents. The percentage of black/African-American student enrollment was 23% compared to 16.4% parent respondents. The white student enrollment was 22% compared to 35% parent respondents.
Figure 8. Ethnicity of parent respondents (n = 183).

The comparison between Hispanic and black/African-American student enrollment and parent survey respondents indicated a lower percentage of parent representation. The comparison between Asian and white student enrollment and parent survey respondents indicated a higher percentage of parent representation.

Figure 9 illustrates the gender of parent respondents. The circle graph indicates that 80.5% parent respondents were female and 19.5% parent respondents were male. The majority of respondents were female.

Figure 9. Gender of parent respondents (n = 190).
Figure 10 illustrates the marital status of parent respondents. The circle graph indicates that 82% of the parent respondents were married, 10.6% were single, and 7.4% were divorced. The majority of parent respondents were married.

Figure 10. Marital status of parent respondents (n = 189).

Figure 11 illustrates the number of children per parent respondent. The circle graph indicates that the majority of respondents had 2 children which represents 53.2% of the respondents. As indicated in Figure 11, 18.9% of the respondents indicated that they had one child and 18.4% of the respondents indicated that they had three children.

Figure 11. Number of children per parent respondent (n = 190).
Figure 12 illustrates the grade levels of school-age children per respondent. The majority of respondents indicated that they had children in grades 3-5. As shown in Figure 12, 28.3% of the respondents had students in grade 3, 27.2% of the respondents had students in grade 4, and 29.3% of the respondents had students in grade 5. In grades K-2, the following was indicated. 13.6% of the respondents had students in grade K, 18.5% had students in grade 1, and 17.9% had students in grade 2.

![Bar chart showing grade levels of school-age children per parent respondent (n = 184).](image)

Figure 12. *Grade levels of school-age children per parent respondent (n = 184).*

Figure 13 illustrates the yearly household income for parent respondents. The majority of the respondents, 56.2%, indicated that their yearly household income is $45,000 or more. It is indicated in Figure 13 that 18.5% of the respondents indicated $15,000-$24,999 as their yearly household income and 11.8% of the respondents indicated $25,000-$34,999 as their yearly household income.
Figure 13: Yearly household income for parent respondents (n = 178).

Figure 14 illustrates the highest level of education for parent respondents. Over half the respondents completed college or post graduate work. As shown in Figure 14, 31.1% of the respondents completed college, 22.6% of the respondents completed post graduate work, 17.9% of the respondents completed some college, 15.3% of the respondents completed high school, 8.9% of the respondents did not complete high school, and 4.2% of the respondents completed trade/technical school.

Figure 14. Highest level of education for parent respondents (n = 190).
Table 5 illustrates a parent survey respondent profile for the largest percentage of parent respondents for each demographic component. The majority of the parent respondents were married, Caucasian females between the ages of 41-45 years old. In addition, the majority of the respondents had two children, with a yearly household income of $45,000 or more. The highest level of education for the majority of the parent respondents was college level.

Table 5

*Parent Survey Respondent Profile*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Data Profile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age of parent</strong></td>
<td>Ages 41-45 (30.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td>Caucasian (35.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td>Female (80.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital Status</strong></td>
<td>Married (82.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Children Per Parent</strong></td>
<td>2 (53.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yearly Household Income</strong></td>
<td>$45,000+ (56.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highest Level of Education</strong></td>
<td>Completed College (31.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RQ1: Is there a significant relationship between teacher leadership and the impact of APTT on family engagement?

The correlation analysis in Table 6 shows that there is no significant relationship between teacher leadership and family engagement. The level of significance for these two variables is .212 which is much higher than the acceptable level of .05.
Table 6

*Teacher Survey Correlations: Family Engagement, Teacher Leadership, and Student Academic Achievement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FamEngage</th>
<th>TeachLead</th>
<th>AdminSupport</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FamEngage</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.212</td>
<td>.050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TeachLead</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.239</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.212</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AdminSupport</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.374*</td>
<td>.542**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*.Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**.Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

RQ2: Is there a significant relationship between teacher leadership in the APTT model on family engagement and student academic achievement?

The 2016 End of Year (EOY) tests in reading were used as the indicators of student academic achievement. The measures of Did Not Meet (DNM) and Meets (M) were used in the analysis. The correlation analysis in Table 7 shows that there is no significant relationship between teacher leadership and student academic achievement in terms of Did Not Meet or Meets indicators. This could be because there was very little variation in the responses to the items measuring teacher leadership. The teachers all tended to answer the items in the same way.
Table 7

*Correlations: Student Academic Achievement with Grade Levels and Teacher Leadership*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EOYReadDNM</th>
<th>EOYReadM</th>
<th>GradeLevel</th>
<th>TeachLead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EOYReadDNM</strong></td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>.447*</td>
<td>-.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.846</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>.936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EOYReadM</strong></td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-.656**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.846</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GradeLevel</strong></td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.447*</td>
<td>-.656**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TeachLead</strong></td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-.016</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>-.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.936</td>
<td>.990</td>
<td>.893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*.Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**.Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

RQ3: Is there a significant relationship between administrative support and teacher leadership in the APTT model?

The data in Table 3 show that there is a strong significant relationship between administrative support and teacher leadership. The level of significance is .003 which is well below the acceptable level of .05.

RQ4: Is there a significant relationship between family engagement and student academic achievement?
There is a significant relationship between family engagement and the Did Not Meet scores of the End of Year Reading Test, level of significance .002, but the relationship between family engagement and the scores on Meets was not significant (see Table 8). It should be noted that the co-efficient between family engagement and the Did Not Meet scores is inverse which means that where the Did Not Meet scores are high, family engagement is low and vice versa. This is supported by the significant, positive relationship, .015, between grade level and Did Not Meet scores. Meaning the upper grade levels have higher Did Not Meet scores and those grade levels have significantly lower family engagement with an inverse co-efficient of -.450 and significance of .014.

Table 8

Correlations: Student Academic Achievement with Grade Levels and Family Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FamEngage</th>
<th>EOYReadDNM</th>
<th>EOYReadM</th>
<th>GradeLevel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FamEngage</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-.543**</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.994</td>
<td>.014</td>
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<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EOYReadDNM</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-.543**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.846</td>
<td>.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EOYReadM</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.994</td>
<td>.846</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GradeLevel</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-.450*</td>
<td>.447*</td>
<td>-.656**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.014</td>
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<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**.Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*.Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
RQ5: Is there a significant relationship between parental perceptions of effectiveness of communications in the APTT model on family engagement?

This study found a significant relationship between parental perception and effectiveness of communications. Parental perception and effectiveness of communications have a correlation of .190 and a significance of .008; therefore, there is a strong significant relationship (see Table 9).

Table 9

*Correlations: Parental Perceptions of APTT*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ParentEngage</th>
<th>Communications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ParentEngage</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.190**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeetingSchedConv</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.481**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeetingUsefulness</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.695**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ParentEngage</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.481**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MeetingSchedConv</th>
<th>MeetingUsefulness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeetingSchedConv</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeetingUsefulness</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.596**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RQ6: Is there a significant relationship between parental perceptions of convenience of scheduling of meetings in the APTT model on family engagement?

This study found a very strong significant relationship between parental perception and convenience of scheduling of meetings. Parental perception and convenience of scheduling of meetings have a correlation of .481 and a significance of .000; therefore, there is an extremely strong significant relationship (see Table 9).

RQ7: Is there a significant relationship between parental perceptions of usefulness of meetings in the APTT model on family engagement?

This study found a significant relationship between parental perception and usefulness of meetings. Parental perception and usefulness of meetings have a correlation
of .695 and a significance of .000; therefore, there is an extremely strong significant relationship.

RQ8: What is the relationship between parental perceptions of the APTT model and the school culture?

Responses from the parents who participated in the focus group indicate a positive relationship between the APTT model and its impact on the school culture. Parents feel honored to have time dedicated for their children’s education. Attending the APTT Meetings helps parents to understand what is expected of them. Moreover, the parent group expressed that they valued seeing growth over the year and meeting other families. In addition, they appreciate being invited into the classroom and being showed what the students are learning.

The parent focus group indicated that they utilize APTT practice activities at home two to three times a week. During the interview, a discussion occurred about mastery of the skill. It was discovered that the frequency of utilizing the APTT practice activities decreased as students started to do well with the activity or game.

Parents find value in implementing the APTT model. They indicated that it improves communication, connects the home and the teacher, provides data on how students are measured with clear expectations, and helps parents to set and meet academic goals. These characteristics of the APTT model as described by the parents fit the cultural elements of the school. The following elements define the culture of this school: fosters positive partnerships among school leaders, teachers, and parents; ensures high quality teaching and student learning; utilizes effective communication between the
home and school; implements professional learning communities; and welcomes family engagement.

RQ9: What is the relationship between parental perceptions of the APTT model and effective school communication?

The parent focus group agreed that the APTT model improves school communication. The focus group encouraged the school to use as many methods as possible to reach all parents. These methods included Class Dojo, email, paper invitations, and phone calls. The majority of the parents indicated that the best way to send an invitation to or communicate about APTT meetings is through digital means such as Class Dojo.

RQ10: What is the relationship between parental perceptions of the APTT model and attendance at meetings?

The focus group also agreed that attendance at APTT Meetings improves the school and home connection. By attending the APTT Meetings, parents receive information about how their child is performing, what he or she needs to work on, and ways to help their child. The parent group stated that they learn how the teacher is teaching students in the classroom. The parents who were interviewed continuously thanked the school for creating activities that are designed to meet the student’s individual needs and learning preferences; how they work best to enhance their learning progress. During the interview, the parents shared that the best day and time to attend APTT Meetings was at the beginning of the week in the evening around 6:00 pm.
Parent Survey Participants

Table 10 illustrates data indicating no significant relationship between family engagement and age, ethnicity, gender, marital status, number of children, grade level of children, and income. However, there was a relationship indicated between family engagement and education level of the parent. Family engagement and education have a correlation of .165 and a significance of .025. Family engagement increased as a parent’s level of education increased.

Table 10

*Correlations: Parents’ Demographics with Family Engagement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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The data were further examined to find which variables had the greatest impact on family engagement. A regression was done to determine this. Table 9 shows that parent perceptions of the usefulness of meetings had the greatest impact on family engagement; 100% change in the usefulness of meeting yields 46% change in family engagement.

Table 11 shows the regression analysis of parental perceptions.

Table 11

Regression Analysis of Parental Perceptions

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a. Predictors: (Constant), MeetingUsefulness
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a. Dependent Variable: ParentEngagement

Summary

The data in Chapter V revealed that there is a significant relationship between administrative support and teacher leadership in the APTT model; there is a significant relationship between family engagement and the Did Not Meet scores of the End of Year Reading Assessment; there is a significant relationship between parental perception and effectiveness of communications; there is a significant relationship between parental perception and convenience of scheduling of meetings; and there is a significant relationship between parental perception and usefulness of meetings. The parent perceptions of the usefulness of meetings had the greatest impact of family engagement.
CHAPTER VI
FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine teacher and parent perceptions of the impact of a high-family engagement model, Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (APTT), at an elementary school in the metro Atlanta area. A parent survey was administered to identify parent perceptions regarding: family engagement, effectiveness of communications, convenience of scheduling of meetings, and usefulness of meetings. In addition, parent interviews were conducted to gain a deeper insight of parent perceptions of effectiveness of communications, convenience of scheduling of meetings, and usefulness of meetings. A teacher survey was created to assess teacher perceptions of the impact of teacher leadership and administrative support on APTT. Data gathered about family engagement and teacher leadership was compared to grades 1-5 end of the year reading levels to identify any correlations.

Findings

The researcher concluded the following findings for each research question.

RQ3: Is there a significant relationship between administrative support and teacher leadership in the APTT model?

According to the analysis of data, there was a statistically significant relationship between administrative support and teacher leadership. The teacher survey displayed a
strong significant relationship between teacher perceptions of administrative support and the implementation of APTT. It is indicated that administrators provide a clear vision for implementing APTT, provide professional learning to implement APTT, provide materials to implement APTT, build teachers’ capacity, evaluate APTT meetings fairly, create a positive school climate for teachers to express opinions about APTT, and encourage families to attend APTT.

RQ4: Is there a significant relationship between family engagement and student academic achievement?

According to the analysis of data, there was a statistically significant relationship between family engagement and the Did Not Meet scores of the End of Year Reading Assessment; however, there is no significant relationship between family engagement and the Meets scores. The upper grade levels have higher Did Not Meet scores and those grade levels have significantly lower family engagement.

RQ5: Is there a significant relationship between parental perceptions of effectiveness of communications in the APTT model on family engagement?

According to the analysis of data, there was a statistically significant relationship between parental perception and effectiveness of communications. The parent survey displayed a strong significant relationship between parent perceptions and the effort of the school to invite parents to APTT meetings.

RQ6: Is there a significant relationship between parental perceptions of convenience of scheduling of meetings in the APTT model on family engagement?
According to the analysis of data, there was a statistically significant relationship between parental perception and convenience of scheduling of meetings. The parent survey displayed a strong significant relationship between parent perceptions and the school’s commitment to schedule meetings on days and times that a family member can attend the APTT meetings.

RQ7: Is there a significant relationship between parental perceptions of usefulness of meetings in the APTT model on family engagement?

According to the analysis of data, there was a statistically significant relationship between parental perception and usefulness of meetings. The parent survey displayed an extremely strong significant relationship between parent perceptions and the family capacity to implement instructional strategies learned at APTT meetings.

RQ8: What is the relationship between parental perceptions of the APTT model and the school culture?

According to the parent focus group responses, there is a positive parent perception between the APTT model and the school culture. The responses from the parent group indicate feelings of honor to be included in a school-wide focus to increase student academic achievement. Parents stated they are committed to utilizing the APTT practice activities at home and they find value in implementing the APTT model.

RQ9: What is the relationship between parental perceptions of the APTT model and effective school communication?

According to the parent focus group responses, there is a positive parent perception between the APTT model and effective communication. The parent focus
group encouraged the school to use methods such as text messages, emails, phone calls, and emails to reach all parents to communicate about the APTT model.

RQ10: What is the relationship between parental perceptions of the APTT model and attendance at meetings?

According to the parent focus group responses, there is a positive parent perception between the APTT model and attendance at meetings. The parent focus group participants discussed the value of attending meetings to improve the school and home connection. Attendance at meetings empowered the parents to implement the APTT practice activities at home.

In addition, it was revealed that the majority of the parent survey respondents were married, Caucasian females. This parent survey respondent data is disproportional when compared to the student ethnicity percentages during the 2015-2016 school year. The white parent respondents were 35% compared to the white student enrollment at 22%.

Summary of Findings

There was a statistically strong relationship found between family engagement, effectiveness of communication, convenience of scheduling of meetings, and usefulness of meetings. In addition, there was also a statistically strong relationship between administrative support and teacher leadership and its impact on the implementation of APTT. Moreover, there was a positive parent perception between the APTT model and the school culture, effective school communication, and attendance at meetings.
Additional data analysis revealed a relationship between family engagement and education level of the parent. Family engagement increased as a parent’s level of education increased. The data were further examined to find which variables had the greatest impact on family engagement. A regression determined that parent perceptions of the usefulness of meetings had the greatest impact on family engagement.

**Implications**

APTT is an innovative family engagement model that focuses on training families to support children’s academic goals by connecting home and school learning. It is grounded in the belief that schools can thrive when families and teachers work together as genuine partners to maximize a child’s education inside and outside of school. These meaningful partnerships provide families with the information, skills, and confidence needed to support grade level learning goals at home. The APTT model includes three team meetings a year and individual sessions where teachers share student performance data, review grade level foundational skills, demonstrate concrete activities that families can do at home, and set 60 day goals. The goal of implementing APTT is to build parents’ capacity to work with their children at home and increase student success.

The findings in the study revealed a strong significant relationship with parent perceptions of the APTT model. Parents recognized and appreciated the school’s commitment to implement the APTT model by utilizing effective communication, scheduling meetings that are convenient for a family member to attend, and providing useful and meaningful instructional practice activities to implement at home. Parent perceptions of the usefulness of meetings had the greatest impact on family engagement.
Schools should make a concerted effort to facilitate APTT meetings that enable parents to gain valuable knowledge about skills and activities that enables them to support their children’s learning at home. Teachers should involve families in the school learning process by building the capacity of parents to help their children reach the SMART goals. As a result of setting goals for their child/children during the APTT meetings, parents were more likely to be consistent in using the activities at home. In addition, families have feelings of success when using the materials because of the “I Do, We Do, You Do” portion of the APTT meetings. Teachers should challenge parents to implement the practice activities at home to increase reading and math skills. Through the APTT meetings, parents are learning the same activities and strategies the teachers use in the classroom which has eliminated some of the confusion and struggles parents have experienced at home when helping their child with academic studies. As parents regularly attend APTT meetings, a genuine partnership between teachers and parents focused on student academic success is formed. Ultimately, parents will feel more confident in their abilities to support their children at home.

In addition, the findings indicated that there is a significant relationship between administrative support and teacher leadership. Administrative support should focus on providing effective professional learning to implement APTT maximizes resources and build the capacity of teachers and all staff members to work effectively with parents. Teachers surveyed agreed that the APTT model impacts family engagement and student academic achievement. Teachers also agreed that administrators provide a clear vision for implementing APTT, evaluate APTT meetings fairly, create a positive school climate for teachers to express opinions about APTT, and encourage families to attend APTT
meetings.

**Recommendations**

**Recommendations for Policy-Makers and District Leaders**

- Policy makers should employ school districts to utilize parental involvement programs such as APTT that are focused on building the parent capacity to continue learning at home.

- Policy-makers should revisit teacher preparation programs to include course work to assist candidates with partnering with parents in an effort to increase student academic achievement.

- The state government should facilitate a professional learning community to include leaders from high-performing school districts implementing the APTT model.
  - The PLC would document the APTT journey in the various districts and compile best practices to encourage other school districts to implement the APTT model.
  - School districts should have a community or family engagement district leader create and implement parental involvement programs such as the APTT model in all Title I and/or Non-Title I schools.

**Recommendations for Educational Leaders**

- Educational leaders should implement the APTT model school-wide as a family engagement instructional strategy to increase student academic achievement.
• Educational leaders should equip teachers to lead effective APTT meetings by providing professional learning focused on teaching parents the importance of APTT, how to share student performance data with parents, why students need to master the foundational skills, how to implement the practice activities at home, and how to set goals.
  o Providing this type of professional learning will increase the parent perception of the usefulness of the meetings.

• Educational leaders should create a school communication plan to invite parents to APTT meetings, ensure parents attend to APTT meetings, and make checkpoints in between APTT meetings to maintain implementation of the practice activities at home.

• Educational leaders should facilitate a teacher and parent leader professional learning community to focus on use of data to increase the capacity of the teachers, school staff, and parents to implement the APTT model effectively as measured by student academic achievement.

**Recommendations for Teachers**

• Teachers should utilize student data to select innovative and creative practice activities that will create high student and parent engagement.

• To help parents understand how to work with their child, teachers should model with fidelity at – home practice activities by the teacher demonstrating first (I Do), the teacher and a parent volunteer
demonstrating second (We Do), and parents practicing with each other (You Do).

- Teachers should place emphasis on the foundational skills in the classroom throughout the school year to increase the likelihood of implementing practice activities at home.

- Teachers should create a partnership with parents to encourage attendance at APTT Meetings and implementation of practice activities at home.

**Recommendations for Future Researchers**

- Replication of this study to include the parent perceptions of the teacher leadership behaviors in the APTT model and its impact on family engagement and student academic achievement.

- Usefulness of meetings was identified as a significant variable in the study. It is recommended that future researchers conduct research that focuses on evaluating the factors that influence usefulness of meetings.

- Teacher leadership in the APTT model did not display a significant relationship to family engagement and student academic achievement in this study. It is recommended that future researchers conduct further studies on teacher leadership in the APTT model and its impact on family engagement and student academic achievement. The study could focus on the relationship between teacher and student perceptions of the APTT model with family engagement and student academic achievement.”
• Replicate this study in other elementary, middle, and high schools, to validate the findings of this study.

Summary

Teachers and parents have formed genuine partnerships through the implementation of the APTT model in an effort to increase student academic success. A parent from the focus group shared that she feels more connected to the learning that occurs at school every day. She further explained that she is able to text her child’s teacher in the evening to ask questions about homework whenever she needs to. This relationship developed as a result of her regular attendance at APTT meetings.

The goal of this study was to determine the effect of teacher leadership, administrative support, parental perception of effectiveness of communications, parental perception of convenience of scheduling of meetings, parental perception of usefulness of meetings and their relationship with family engagement and student academic achievement. The recommendations from the study will hopefully assist in building the capacity of school leaders, teachers, school staff, and parents to implement family engagement models focused on increasing student academic achievement.
APPENDIX A

Survey Instrument Completed by Teachers

Dear Parent/Guardian:

You are kindly asked to complete this survey. The data will be used for a dissertation at Clark Atlanta University. The purpose of this study is to examine teacher and parent perceptions of the impact of a high-family engagement model, Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (APTT). Your answers will be kept totally confidential. Please do not include your name in this survey. Thank you for your time.

Grade level(s) K 1 2 3 4 5

Directions: Please select one response that best represents your thinking about each of the following statements.

1. Parents at my school attend APTT meetings.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree

2. At this school, parents implement APTT practice activities at home.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree

3. Parents use the instructional strategies learned at APTT meetings to support learning at home.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree
4. I provide families with practice activities and materials to use at home to support student learning.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree

5. I provide families with the strategies they need at APTT meetings to be meaningfully engaged.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree

6. I have the materials and equipment I need to implement APTT right.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree

7. I feel supported by administration to implement APTT.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree

8. Administration communicates a clear vision of how effective APTT should take place in this school.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree

9. I feel free to express opinions about APTT even if they are different from administration.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree
10. Administration is committed to helping me develop and improve my APTT meetings.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree

11. Administration is fair when evaluating APTT meetings in my classroom.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree

12. I have been provided with the professional learning necessary to implement APTT meetings.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree

13. Administration is committed to building the strengths of each teacher to implement APTT.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree

14. Administration has a strategic approach to encourage families to attend APTT.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree

15. APTT PLC helped me feel more prepared to support my families to use practice activities at home.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree
16. Administration encourages my development to implement APTT.

   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree
APPENDIX B

Survey Instrument Completed by Parents

Dear Parent/Guardian:

You are kindly asked to complete this survey. The data will be used for a dissertation at Clark Atlanta University. The purpose of this study is to examine teacher and parent perceptions of the impact of a high-family engagement model, Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (APTT). Your answers will be kept totally confidential. Please do not include your name in this survey. Thank you for your time.

Section A

Directions: Please select one response that best represents your thinking about each of the following statements.

1. I attend APTT meetings at my child’s school.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree

2. Having the teacher demonstrate to families the practice activities during the APTT meeting helped me understand what I needed to do at home with my child.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree

3. Getting to practice the skills during APTT meetings helped me to understand what to do with my child at home.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree
4. My child’s teacher gives me the information I need to implement APTT practice activities at home.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree

5. I understand the teacher’s directions for APTT at home practice activities.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree

6. I am comfortable supporting my child’s learning utilizing APTT practice activities at home.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree

7. My child’s teacher encourages my family to implement APTT practice activities at home.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree

8. Teachers offer opportunities to help my family use APTT practice activities at home.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree

9. I feel comfortable talking to my child about APTT practice activities.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree
10. My child’s school makes a good effort of inviting parents to APTT meetings.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree

11. I prefer APTT digital invitations (ex: phone call voice message, email, Class Dojo).
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree

   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree

13. APTT meetings are scheduled at times when someone from my family can attend.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree

14. Mondays and/or Tuesdays are the best days for me to attend APTT meetings.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree

15. The 6 PM start time for APTT meetings is a convenient time for me to attend.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree
16. I find the APTT at home practice activities to be useful.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree

17. I am informed as to how to implement APTT practice activities at home.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree

18. I know what I have to do to help my child be successful with APTT at home practice activities.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree

19. My family regularly helps my child with APTT practice activities at home.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree

20. The APTT meetings I attend are helpful to my child’s academic progress.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree

21. Setting academic goals for my child during APTT meetings was helpful to me.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree
22. After attending APTT meetings, I am more confident to use the APTT practice activities at home to support my child’s learning.

   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree

Section B

Directions: Select the response that best represents your answers.

Age
___ 20-25    ___26-30    ___31-35    ___36-40
___41-45    ___46-50    ___51-55    ___56+

Ethnicity
___African American    ___Asian    ___Caucasian
___Hispanic    ___Native American    ___Multiracial
___Other

Gender
___Female    ___Male

Marital Status
___Single    ___Married    ___Divorced

Number of children
___1    ___2    ___3    ___4    ___5+

Grade Levels of school-age children
___K    ___1    ___2    ___3    ___4    ___5
Yearly Household Income

___Lesson that $9,999
___$10,000-$14,999
___$15,000-$24,999

___$25,000-$34,999
___$35,000-$44,999
___$45,000+

Education Levels

Please indicate your highest level of education.

___5th-12th grade  ___High School Diploma/G.E.D  ___Trade/technical school

___Some college    ___Completed college       ___Post graduate
APPENDIX C

Focus Group Interview Instrument

1. How do you feel about being invited by your child’s teacher to attend Academic Parent Teacher Team meetings?

2. What’s the best way for the school and your child’s teacher to invite you to APTT meetings?

3. What’s the best way to communicate with you about APTT meetings?

4. What’s the best day and time to attend APTT meetings?

5. What kind of information do you receive when you attend APTT meetings?

6. How often do you utilize APTT practice activities at home?

7. Is there any value in implementing APTT at our school?
Dear Parent:

I am a graduate student at Clark Atlanta University conducting research to investigate teacher and parent perceptions of the impact of a high-family engagement model, Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (APTT). This study may further the understanding of factors that affect family engagement and student achievement. I believe that this information will help educational leaders throughout the district.

Information obtained in this study will not be shared with other teachers, administrators, parents, or district leaders. There are no known risk factors with your participation in this investigation. Through your voluntary participation in this study, your perspective and accounts are valued.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call me at 770-921-2400. If you prefer to email me, you can reach me at Toni_Ferguson@Gwinnett.k12.ga.us.

Thank you for your participation.

Toni Ferguson
Clark Atlanta University
Doctoral Candidate
REFERENCES


