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How Factors of School Leadership, School Culture, and Teachers' Perceptions Influence Parental Engagement in Two Title I Urban Middle Schools: Implications for Educational Leaders

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ABSTRACT

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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HOW FACTORS OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP, SCHOOL CULTURE, AND
TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS INFLUENCE PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT
IN TWO TITLE I URBAN MIDDLE SCHOOLS: IMPLICATIONS FOR
EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

Committee Chair: Sheila Gregory, Ph.D.

Dissertation dated May 2018

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify how the select factors of school leadership, school culture and teachers' perceptions influence parental engagement in two Title I Urban Middle Schools. This study investigated the strategies and programs that have an impact on parental engagement to determine how these can be used to improve parental engagement in Title I Urban Middle Schools. In order to accomplish the goal of this qualitative study, two Urban Title I Middle Schools from a large school district in the Southeastern United States were selected. This research design provided the opportunity to address the research problem of the factors that influence parental engagement in two Title I Middle Schools. The researcher collected and examined relevant data from teachers' surveys, parents' surveys, interviews with two

middle school principals, a focus group discussion with parents, an analysis of documents, and interviews with parent liaisons at each middle school.

The researcher ensured the reliability and validity of the study by utilizing the triangulation method. Reliability and validity are important to any research and are often times considered as the “rigor” that is necessary for all kinds of research (Merriam, 1995). This triangulation method included open-ended interviews, surveys, a focus group discussion, and document analysis that were instrumental in determining and understanding the experiences, perceptions, and beliefs of those participants involved in the study. The study provided rich and valuable data that were used to address the research problem of the factors that influence parental engagement in Title I Middle Schools. The findings of the study provided an understanding of the factors that affect the level of parental engagement in Title I Middle Schools and also offered insights into understanding how these factors create challenges to parents in becoming more involved. The findings concluded that the leadership style of the principal, teachers’ perceptions of parental engagement, and school culture do have a substantial influence on parental engagement. The researcher also offers recommendations for state policies, school districts, and local school administrators on how they can create and implement programs to enrich their parental engagement activities.

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EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

A DISSERTATION

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

BY

JENEVEE ULETT SPENCE

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

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My Savior Jesus Christ provided me with the strength to embark on this journey and He gave me the perseverance to accomplish my dream. I am forever grateful for His guidance through difficult times.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iii

LIST OF FIGURES viii

LIST OF TABLES ix

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION 1

 Statement of the Problem..... 5

 Purpose of the Study 7

 Significance of the Study 7

 Research Questions 9

 Definition of Terms..... 10

 Summary 12

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE 13

 Organization of the Review 13

 Dependent Variable: Parental Engagement 14

 Independent Variables 24

 Summary 46

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 47

 Introduction..... 47

 Theory of Variables 48

 Relationship among the Variables 58

 Summary 61

CHAPTER

IV.	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	62
	Research Design.....	62
	Description of the Setting	64
	Sampling Procedures	66
	Working with Human Subjects.....	67
	Instrumentation	68
	Participation and Location of Research	70
	Data Collection Procedures.....	71
	Description of Data Analysis Methods	74
	Summary	75
V.	ANALYSIS OF THE DATA.....	77
	Introduction.....	77
	Data Analysis of Teacher Surveys	78
	Data Analysis of Parents’ Surveys.....	80
	Analysis of Title I Documents	82
	Summary of Document Analysis	87
	Interview Analysis	88
	Focus Group Discussion Analysis	89
	Data Analysis of Research Questions	90
	Summary	110
VI.	FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	111

Introduction.....	111
Findings.....	111
Conclusions and Implicaitons.....	122
Dominant Themes.....	122
Transformational Leadership.....	125
Social Cognitive Theory.....	126
Cultural Capital Theory.....	126
Limitations.....	127
Recommendations.....	128
Summary.....	132

APPENDIX

A. Coding Matrix.....	135
B. Teachers’ Survey Protocol.....	137
C. Teachers’ Survey Questions.....	138
D. Parents’ Survey Protocol.....	140
E. Parents’ Survey Questions.....	141
F. Principals’ Interview Protocol.....	144
G. Principals’ Interview Questions.....	145
H. Parent Center Liaison Interview Protocol.....	147
I. Parent Center Liaison Interview Questions.....	149
J. Parents’ Focus Group Protocol.....	151

K. Focus Group Discussion Questions	152
REFERENCES.....	153

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure

1. Relationship among theories and Epstein's Parental Involvement Model.....57
2. Relationship among the variables59

LIST OF TABLES

Table

1. Demographics of Teachers	79
2. Teachers' Survey Responses.....	80
3. Demographics of Parents	81
4. Parents' Survey Responses	82

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Parental engagement impacts students' overall academic, social and behavioral outcomes. There is widespread agreement between teachers, administrators, and parents on the effects of parental engagement on students' academic achievement in elementary, middle, and high schools. When parents and families are engaged in their children's education, they tend to perform better in schools and have improved student outcomes (Henderson & Berla, 1994). Studies have concluded that parents and families can make significant contributions to their children's learning and this can lead to a positive impact on students' academic performance in middle schools (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Jeynes, 2005). Researchers have documented the effects of parental involvement on students' achievement in schools. The findings revealed by a study conducted by Henderson and Mapp (2002) in a report entitled "A New Wave of Evidence" reported, "When schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more" (p. 13). Family engagement represents the bridge between the home and the school and it has a positive influence on the child's development as he progresses through the education system. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory helps to explain how the external characteristics and the child's environment will interact and subsequently affect the

Child's growth and development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). While most stakeholders agree on the advantages of parental engagement, the research shows a difference between the level of involvement at the elementary level and that of the middle school years (Dauber & Epstein, 1989; Eccles & Harold, 1996; Hill & Chao, 2009). However, the literature is not conclusive on the causes of the decline and the factors that impact parental engagement in middle schools (Hill & Tyson, 2009).

Family engagement in elementary and middle schools plays a significant role in helping students succeed in school. Flaxman and Inger (1991) emphasize the benefits of parental involvement at all grade levels and they explain the importance to students' performance. "The benefits of parent involvement are not confined to early childhood or the elementary grades. There are strong positive effects from involving parents continuously through high school" (p. 5). However, as children leave elementary school, the level of parental engagement declines and studies have demonstrated the decline right into the middle and high school years (Green, Walker, Hoover- Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007; Spera, 2005). While there is evidence on the advantages of parental engagement to students' academic performance, several studies have been conducted that specifically address the advantages of parental engagement in middle and high schools (Hoover- Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Emanique & Davis, 2009; Trusty, 1999; Voorhis, 2001; Shumow, & Miller, 2001). However, there is not a body of research that offers clear explanations as to the factors that influence parental engagement in middle schools (Jeynes, 2005; Balli, Demo, & Wedman, 1998; Catsambis, 1998).

Educators, administrators, the public and even some parents perceive the lack of parental involvement as the single biggest problem facing our nation's schools (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007). The school recognizes the importance of forming partnerships between the school, families and the community in promoting parental engagement in middle schools. Subsequently, there are factors at the school level that do impact the level of parental engagement in middle schools. Factors of school leadership, school culture and teachers' perceptions fall under the school umbrella and schools do have the control and the mechanism over these indicators. Schools, therefore, must accept some responsibility when parents claim that they do not feel welcome and accepted as equal partners in the education of their children and therefore are not as engaged in their children's education (Jones, 2001; Caplan, 2000; Lontos, 1992; Baker, 2000).

The federal government's No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 includes legislation that holds schools accountable for developing parental engagement programs in order to improve students' academic performance and to close the achievement gap. Over the past three decades, numerous studies have documented the connection between parental engagement and students' academic, social, and emotional development. The research is conclusive that parental engagement improves students' overall success not only in American schools, but schools all over the world (Catsambis, 1998; Epstein, Clark, Salinas-Clark, & Sanders, 1997; Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006). However, despite the extensive research on parental engagement, schools, families and the community sometimes fail to come to an agreement on how to create healthy and

effective partnerships to meet the needs of 21st century education for families and their children (Price-Mitchell, 2011).

Educational leaders need to understand how their institutions' programs, their school culture and how the practices, beliefs and customs of their staff can influence parental engagement. School administrators must also recognize that in the 21st century, the family dynamics have changed and as a result, education leaders must change their approach to partnering with families to meet the educational needs of every child. They must adapt to the changing family structure in today's society and they will have to make changes on how they perceive families and the role that families play in education. While there is consensus on the positive influence of parental engagement, government and school officials also believe that it is an effective reform mechanism that will help close the achievement gap (Henderson & Berla, 1994; Henderson, 1987; Sattes, 1985; Eccles & Harold, 1993). However, adequate research is not available that can provide useful information to local educational agencies, state agencies, and school leaders on how specific factors of principal leadership style, school culture, and teachers' perceptions can influence parental engagement. This descriptive case study examines the effects that these factors have on parental engagement and how it can enhance the literature on parental engagement in middle schools. Furthermore, this research can provide not only a framework, but also specific strategies that local school district officials, school leaders and educators can utilize in designing parental engagement programs and activities in middle schools.

Statement of the Problem

Research has shown that parental engagement has a positive effect on students' academic achievement, school attendance, and discipline and parent school communication (Desforges & Abouchar, 2003; Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996; Fan & Chen, 2001). Henderson and Mapp (2002) found that,

Regardless of family income or background, students with involved parents are more likely to: (a) earn higher grades and test scores, (b) enroll in higher-level programs, (c) be promoted, (d) pass their classes, (e) earn credits, (f) attend school regularly, (g) have better social skills, (h) show improved behavior, and (i) adapt well to school. (p. 1)

While all stakeholders agree on the benefits of parental engagement, there has been a marked decline in the level of parental engagement at the middle school level (Zill & Nord, 1994; Epstein, 1990). Parents and families face many challenges during the middle school years and this impacts their level of parental engagement (Dauber & Epstein, 1989; Hill & Chao, 2009). Some of these middle school students oftentimes discourage their parents from being engaged in their education, especially if they perceive the involvement as taking away or reducing their freedom and authority (Stevenson & Baker, 1987). Therefore, as children transition from elementary to middle school, administrators must grapple with numerous challenges in trying to increase parental engagement (Murray, Finigan-Carr, Copeland-Linder, Haynie, & Cheng, 2014).

The literature does not adequately address the factors that influence parental engagement in middle schools and the obstacles that families face (Barber & Patin,

1997). Additionally, the research does not provide conclusive evidence of the major contributors that are weakening parental engagement in middle schools; whether the decline is caused by factors at the school level, the community or with the parents and families (Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Ho Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996; Izzo, Weissberg, Kaspro, & Fendrich, 1999). Some middle schools do not have specific parental engagement programs that are communicated to parents, and some parents claim that they do not know the level of parental engagement that is required by the school and what constitutes the schools' expectations (Englund, Luckner, Whaley, & Egeland, 2004; Jeynes, 2007). Additionally, the different perceptions by teachers and parents only contribute to the challenges of promoting successful parental engagement programs in Title I Urban Middle schools.

The federal government has mandated all school districts across America with the responsibility to promote and strengthen parental engagement within their schools. Title I, Part A Guidelines from the federal government has identified activities and programs that the parents, school staff, and students should undertake to promote parental engagement. (U. S. Department of Education, 2004). While the federal government is encouraging a shared responsibility of parental engagement to support students' academic outcomes, there are many factors that impede its progress in schools, especially in Title I Urban Middle and High schools. It becomes difficult, therefore, for Title I Urban Middle schools to develop successful parental engagement programs without the full knowledge and understanding of the challenges they face and what influences parental involvement. Subsequently, it is extremely important to study the factors that influence parental

engagement at the middle school level with the goal of improving parental engagement. Therefore, an investigation of how factors of school leadership, school culture and teachers' perceptions influence parental engagement in two Title I Urban Middle Schools will provide critical information to educational leaders on how they can strengthen their parental engagement programs and establish positive and meaningful relationships with parents and families.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify how the select factors of school leadership, school culture and teachers' perceptions influence parental engagement in two Title I Urban Middle Schools. This study investigates the strategies and programs that have an impact on parental engagement and to determine how these can be used to improve parental engagement in Title I Urban Middle Schools.

Significance of the Study

Educators, administrators, and government officials believe that parent, family and community engagement programs remain critical to improving students' outcomes and that they are crucial in helping to close the achievement gap. As a matter of fact, experts in the field of education claim that when schools fail to engage parents and the community, the number of students who are prepared for college or a 21st century career will decline dramatically (Fege & Foster, 2011). There is a body of research that addresses parental engagement in schools but not many studies have focused on parental engagement in middle schools. Therefore, this study identifies the factors that have an impact on parental engagement in Title I Urban Middle Schools and contributes to

existing research on parental engagement programs. This information will be quite effective in helping school districts and educational leaders develop and promote programs to increase parental engagement.

This research will highlight specific strategies and programs that the Title I Urban Middle Schools under study are utilizing to improve their parental engagement programs. More specifically, this study demonstrates how these Title I schools are implementing the Federal Title I guidelines, with regards to parental engagement programs and the level of success they have achieved. Additionally, this research explores how the factors of principal leadership style, school culture, and teachers' perceptions influence parental engagement. The findings from this study will provide vital information to local educational agencies and school administrators that can be instrumental in helping to develop and implement parental engagement programs. School administrators can, therefore, duplicate some of these programs and apply strategies that have been tested and documented to increase parent engagement at their respective middle schools. This information can provide a positive impact on helping Title I Urban Middle Schools foster family and community partnerships and to improve their level of parental engagement at the middle school level. Finally, this study will help middle school administrators to apply the findings of this research on principal's leadership style, school culture, and teachers' perceptions and use this information in developing specific parent engagement programs to promote students' academic performance.

Research Questions

- RQ1: Is there a relationship between a principal's leadership style and parental engagement?
- RQ2: How do teachers' perceptions influence parental engagement?
- RQ3: Is there a relationship between school climate and parental engagement?
- RQ4: Is there a relationship between the schools' use of technology in communicating with parents and the level of parental engagement?
- RQ5: Is there a relationship between parents' perceptions of parental engagement and their actual level of engagement?
- RQ6: Is there a relationship between school culture and parental engagement?
- RQ7: What is the relationship between students' attendance and parental engagement?
- RQ8: What is the relationship between students' discipline and parental engagement?
- RQ9: What is the level of engagement parents have in Title I funded schools?
- RQ10: Is there a relationship between students' academic achievement and parental engagement?
- RQ11: Is there a relationship between parents' use of the School's Parent Center and parental engagement?
- RQ12: What is the relationship between the schools' funding of the Parent Center and parental engagement?

Definition of Terms

Parental engagement is defined as parents actively involved in the education of their children by collaborating with schools to ensure the success of their children. Some examples of parental engagement activities include parents reading with their children, helping with homework, communicating and conferencing with teachers, serving in leadership positions, and decision making at the school such as the PTA. Parental engagement also refers to the use of technology to encourage meaningful participation and to keep parents informed and engaged with regards to the progress of their children. Some of these tools include video conferencing, mobile apps like ClassDojo and Remind 101, video podcasts, emails, and skype.

Principal leadership style has to do with the personal background, the personality and character traits and the educational philosophy of the principal. The principal leadership style describes their philosophy and their vision on leadership and how these qualities influence their actions as the school leader and how they help to determine the effectiveness of the total school program. In this study, it also details how the leadership style of the principal promotes parental engagement.

Teachers' perceptions of parental engagement describe the attitudes, beliefs and assumptions that teachers make with regard to the level of parental involvement that is encouraged. Teachers' perceptions and their philosophies on parental engagement impact their expectations and their approaches to parental engagement and may subsequently influence the level of parental engagement.

School climate is defined as the interpersonal relationships among school staff, students and parents that affect engagement, the emotional and physical safety of the school learning environment, and the promotion of trust and respect among all stakeholders.

Schools' use of technology includes technological resources that the school uses to foster student learning and engagement and to communicate with parents and the community. This may include computers, smart phones, iPads, emails, text messages, video conferencing, electronic newsletters, mobile apps and video podcasts.

Parents' perceptions of parental engagement refer to their attitudes, philosophies, assumptions and feelings towards their children's education and how these beliefs help to determine whether or not parents become engaged and their level of engagement.

School culture reflects the values, norms, beliefs, traditions, behaviors and characteristics of administrators, teachers and students. These guiding principles and attitudes will help to determine how a school functions. The history of a school can help to influence its culture.

Students' attendance is defined as students who are physically present at school and in class during instructional time.

Students' discipline has to do with the students' behavior and attitude in school, how these practices disrupt instructional time and how they affect the safe and orderly learning environment.

Federal Title I Part A Guidelines provide information from the Federal Government about the allocation of funds that offer an opportunity for schools to create and implement strategies that will help academically at risk students and help close the achievement gap in Title I schools.

Parents' use of parent center has to do with how parents and families make use of the resources at the Title I parent centers that are provided by the schools. It relates to parents' use of the computers, checking students' academic progress and grades, communicating with school personnel, and using books and websites to help their children with homework and projects.

Schools' funding of parent center is determined by the school's leadership priorities, what resources are considered to be important to Title I students and their parents and to what extent the parents and families actually make use of the resources. This also helps to determine how the school actually spends Title I funds.

Summary

In summary, this study can shed light on helping Title I Urban Middle Schools foster family and community partnerships and improve their level of parental engagement at the middle school. In addition, the significance of this study will help middle school administrators apply the findings from this study on principal's leadership style, school culture and teachers' perceptions of parental engagement and use this information in developing specific parent engagement programs that will promote students' academic performance and achievement.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Organization of the Review

Parents, school administrators, educators, and policymakers all agree that parental engagement fosters student academic achievement. There have been a growing number of research studies that have documented the benefits of parental engagement in schools and in children's education (Auerbach, 2009; Epstein & Salinas, 2004; Sheldon & Epstein, 2004). Policies have been developed and implemented to create changes in the education system that support and encourage increased parental engagement and family and community partnerships. Henderson and Mapp (2002) reviewed and analyzed 85 studies on parental engagement and through their research they documented the advantages of parental engagement. The findings from their studies revealed that when parents deliberately plan and implement activities and become engaged in their children's education, there are significant benefits to the children, their parents, educators and schools (Henderson & Berla, 1994). However, while there is consensus on the advantages of parental engagement, there is continued discussion on the factors that influence parental engagement. This chapter provides a review of the literature that relates to parental engagement and the factors that impact the level of parental engagement.

In this chapter, the researcher first provides a historical overview of parental engagement and a review of the literature of the dependent variable of parental

engagement. Finally, a review of the literature is presented that directly relates to the independent variables that are applicable to this study. This includes (a) principal leadership style, (b) teachers' perceptions of parental engagement, (c) school culture, (d) schools' use of technology, (e) parents' perceptions of parental engagement, (f) school culture, (g) students' attendance, (h) students' discipline, (i) what is the level of engagement parents have in Title I funded schools, (j) student academic achievement, (k) parents' use of the parent center, and (l) schools' funding of the parent center.

Dependent Variable: Parental Engagement

Historical Background of Parental Engagement

It is important to understand the historical background of parental involvement as it provides a useful context in reviewing the relevant literature. The historical developments of parental engagement have helped to influence the debate on the benefits of parental engagement and the philosophy, insights, attitudes and beliefs of society as a whole (Tekin, 2011). Parental engagement in their children's education is certainly not a new phenomenon but has been around for many years. From the earlier years and throughout past centuries, parents have been their children's first teachers. At the beginning of the 20th century, middle-class families became involved in their children's nursery schools and educational centers that were located in suburban towns and many of them volunteered as paraprofessionals (Gestwicki, 2007). Parental involvement helped to establish relationships between the school and the home and to decrease operating costs, and it was often believed that parents know what is best for their children (Gestwicki, 2007). However, it was not until the 1920s and up to the 1960s that parents from lower

socioeconomic backgrounds became involved in their children's education. Programs were developed and implemented that supported parental self-development training and learning and various other activities that encouraged parental involvement (Tekin, 2011). According to Martinez (2004), it was not until post-World War II in 1945, that parents became involved and participated in programs like parent conferences, PTA meetings, fundraising events, and other school related activities.

Head Start, the child development program that was created in 1964 was the first program to deliberately involve parents and families in their services to promote the well-being of the children. Head Start was developed for children of disadvantaged families and many educators believe that parents and families were not equipped with the knowledge and skills to be involved in their children's education (Gestwicki, 2007). However, the Head Start program believed that parents and families' participation was critical to the growth and development of their children and therefore, they required that parents become fully involved. According to Zigler and Muenchow (1992), who was one of the founders of Head Start, its main philosophy was that parents and educators were equal partners in the education of their children. Gestwicki (2007) believed that while parents and teachers brought different types of expertise to the education of the children, both parties were considered experts. Parents were able to make their own decisions in terms of their level of commitment and what activities were suited to their life styles.

The goal of parental involvement was for educators to develop a partnership between the school and the home and to provide collaboration with families in order to improve the outcome of its students. According to Watson, Sanders, and Lawson (2012),

parental involvement was envisioned as a means to enhance the school's ability to comprehend and appreciate the diverse values and cultures of families and to create effective solutions in meeting the needs of students. While the Head Start Program broke ground in the 1960s and laid the foundation for increased parental participation and made parental involvement as one of its major characteristics, other government policies followed soon after. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 required parents to become members of school advisory boards and to fully participate in school related activities for their children. Experts in education believe that if children are to accomplish their full potential and realize their goals, then their parents must be given the opportunities to provide guidance to the school and to help in influencing the character of school programs that will impact their children's development (Henrich & Blackman-Jones, 2006).

ESEA of 1965 implemented a series of programs including Title I programs aimed at providing aid to poor and disadvantaged children. In the beginning, ESEA mandated community participation in school programs and by the 1970s policy makers required district level parent councils at all institutions receiving Title I Funds. By 1974, the federal government strengthened ESEA and in its reauthorization, schools were required to allow parents to have a voice in the education programs and they had to outline specific responsibilities of parents as well as opportunities for them to be actively involved in parent school councils (Shields, 1994). While ESEA authorizes funds for instructional materials, Title I programs and professional development, providing

resources to support educational programs and to promote parental involvement remained a central part of this policy.

According to Watson et al. (2012), the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s was an era in which research was designed and undertaken to address the mandates of the federal government as they relate to education and parental involvement. The Even Start program was another federally funded program that was created and authorized in 1988 to provide families with access to training and support to heighten the academic achievement of students. It also promoted mandatory parental involvement and parents were required to sign an agreement to comply with the mandate. Parents had to attend orientation sessions, ensure their children attend school, participate in school events during the year, read with their child and attend five hours of family school partnerships workshops (Gestwicki, 2007). While parental involvement in education fluctuated over the years, it continues to be an integral part in family school partnerships. In 1994, President Clinton signed the America 2000 Act into law and this policy authorized the inclusion of parents in the development of school programs for their children (Coleman, 1991).

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act that was signed into law in 2002 by President George W. Bush was a reauthorization of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). NCLB included stronger accountability of the education system for student achievement, more flexibility, and local control as well as increased parental involvement. NCLB allowed parents to have more choices in their children's education and it also provided families with opportunities to ensure that their children receive the

best education possible by holding all school officials accountable. NCLB made family and school partnerships one of the priorities under NCLB and as such this ACT emphasized the PTAs national standards for family-school partnerships. According to the National PTA, families are active participants in the life of the school and families and school staff will engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning and families and how school staff continuously collaborates to support student learning. While policy makers at the local and national level continue to include parental involvement programs in laws that have an impact on education, O'Bryan (2006) believed that much work needs to be carried out in the area of parental involvement especially among African-American parents. Joyce Epstein (2005) also discussed the parent involvement requirement of NCLB Act from a sociological perspective and said that there should have been more effective programs by schools, local and state officials to develop improved school family and community partnerships. Epstein stated that the authorities should have created more professional development programs to equip teachers and school officials to help in engaging families and forming more effective school family collaborations (Epstein, 2005).

In 2015, President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) which reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. This new policy terminated the NCLB law that had given the federal government more control in the nation's schools. ESSA, therefore, ended the federal government's heavy involvement in education and the Act gives control back to the states. However, parent involvement remains a significant part of the federal government's Title I Part A Guidelines.

According to the U. S. Department of Education (1994), Title I funds are allocated to schools with high populations of students experiencing poverty and the federal government has certain stipulations with regards to parental involvement policies. Title I is intended to help close the achievement gap among minority and disadvantaged students and to change the culture of schools and education in America. In American schools, success is defined as student achievement and the schools' investment in all its students (U. S. Department of Education, 1994). The allocation of Title I funds is also contingent upon schools developing "parent compact" and forming family school partnerships to promote increased parental involvement and improved student outcomes. However, while various laws were enacted to address school family partnerships, parental involvement continues to be a challenge in the 21st century and schools all across America continue to grapple with this issue of how to create and implement effective parental involvement programs.

According to Christopher Henrich (2010), parental engagement is engagement in learning at home and this includes activities like reading and going to the library, involvement in school decision making and school policies, participation in school activities and communicating and connecting with teachers. Parental involvement is oftentimes used instead of parental engagement because the literature makes reference to parental involvement in most cases. However, parental engagement refers to parents who are actively engaged in activities at home and at school with the goal of promoting their children's' educational success. Henrich provided a list of activities that applies to parents who are actively engaged in their children's' education. These activities include

helping with homework, visiting and observing classrooms, participating in school councils, serve in leadership positions, and decision making on school programs, attending parent teacher conferences, attending concerts and visiting museums and the zoos. However, with the advancement of technology in the 21st century, teachers, and schools must keep parents engaged by utilizing different forms of technology to keep them informed of their children's learning and their experiences at school. Parental engagement therefore includes the use of technology such as emails, podcasts, video conferencing, Remind 101 and skype which helps parents and educators to interact and communicate about students' learning. Since most parents are faced with challenges of time and distance, the use of technology will not only decrease the barriers to meaningful parental engagement but it will also provide parents with a much better experience of being involved in their children's education.

It is important to understand the difference between involvement and engagement if schools are to develop meaningful home school relationships with the goal of improving student achievement. Ferlazzo and Hammond (2009) believed that when schools focus on family involvement, they identify school projects and inform parents of their needs and how they can contribute to the school program. However, Ferlazzo and Hammond said that on the other hand, parental engagement has to do with schools that listen to the parents and that allow them to have a voice in school activities and to help in decision making at the school. Ferlazzo and Hammond claimed that most of the research indicates that any kind of family involvement is beneficial to promoting student achievement. However, they explained that almost all the research arrive at the

conclusion that any level of family engagement can produce even better results for students, families, schools, and for their communities (Ferlazzo & Hammond, 2009).

Parents are considered to be their children's first teachers and they are the most important role models in their young children's lives. Most parents consider their children's academic achievement and their overall success in school and in life as their number one goal. Therefore, many of them seek to become engaged in their children's education and to be their advocates in the education process. Parental involvement was designed to develop and promote a healthy partnership between the home and the school and to engage the family in being actively involved in activities at home and at school. Parents who are engaged in their children's education promote their children's academic achievement and their success. Brown (1989) claimed that when parents are involved in their children's education, both the parents and the children are more likely to benefit. Brown also explains that parental engagement enhances children's self-esteem, improves their academic achievement, and improves relationships between parents and children. Accordingly, Brown also believed that this helps parents to cultivate a more positive attitude towards school and to understand the education process (Brown, 1989). Parental engagement is one way in which parents can demonstrate to their children how much value they place on their education and its significance in their lives. Trotman (2001) explained that when there is a positive relationship between the home and the school, there are a lot of advantages to the students and while these benefits are quite evident to the students, the school also benefits from having supportive parents. Parental engagement benefits students academically as well as in the development of other aspects

of their lives. One positive impact of parent involvement is to reverse the disappointing school performance of some students and to create an environment that supports all students emotionally (Watson, Lawson, & McNeal, 2012).

Joyce Epstein of Johns Hopkins University, who has conducted extensive research in this field, developed a parental involvement model that consists of six components (Epstein, 2010). She established this framework as a tool to be used to assist educators in developing school and family partnership programs. Epstein's six types of framework for parental involvement include:

1. Parenting
2. Communicating
3. Volunteering
4. Learning at Home
5. Decision Making
6. Collaborating with the Community

As students enter middle schools, they undergo changes in adolescent development, and while they endure biological and cognitive growth, they also experience changes in their social development and relationships with their families especially the parent—adolescent relationship (Adams & Berzonsky, 2003; Grolnick, Price, Beiswenger, & Sauck, 2007; Keating, 2004). Middle school students begin to develop their own sense of freedom during the adolescence period and as such they want to be responsible for making their own decisions and for accepting any consequences thereof. Many middle school students do not even want to be seen with their parents and,

as a result, they discourage their parents from visiting the school and meeting with their teachers. As a consequence, parents and families develop changing perspectives on their level of engagement in their children's education during the middle school years. Parents oftentimes have to confront other challenges in becoming engaged in their children's education during the middle school years. Many parents did not have positive school experiences when they were students and this factor affects their behavior, attitudes and their level of engagement. This may cause some parents to feel uncomfortable when visiting the school and in addition to that some of them feel inadequate or insecure in interacting and communicating with the teachers. These are some of the contributing factors to parents' level of engagement during the middle school period.

According to Epstein and Macgiver (1990), there is usually a decline in the level of parental engagement during middle school education. As parents navigate the education system throughout middle school, they are confronted with a more bureaucratic system, one that involves more teachers and many more courses than in the elementary system (Dauber & Epstein, 1989; Eccles & Harold, 1996; Hill & Chao, 2009). During the middle school years, teachers have several classes with a larger number of students that they teach and this creates challenges for the parents in terms of whom to contact with regards to their children's progress (Sanders & Epstein, 2000). Sometimes these changes result in a decline in students' academic performance and educators therefore promote increased parental engagement as one way to improve students' academic achievement (Barber & Olsen, 2004; Eccles, 2004; Gutman & Midgley, 2000). Parental engagement has been recognized by educators as a critical factor in supporting students' performance.

Educational theories, research studies as well as government policies have all identified increased parental involvement and effective school–family relationships as having a significant role in their children’s education. This is also regarded as an effective way in helping to close the achievement gap and maximizing students’ potential (Dearing et al., 2006).

Independent Variables

Principal Leadership Style

Research suggests that, “a positive school climate and principal leadership are pivotal to building parent-school partnerships and supporting parent engagement in child learning more generally” (Povey, Willis, Campbell, & Pedde, 2016, p. 1). Research findings demonstrate that a principal’s leadership style, communication, attitudes and expectations play a significant role in helping to shape the school’s culture and in facilitating parental engagement (Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014). It has also been recognized that a school principal leadership style has some impact on a school’s learning environment as well as on students’ academic outcomes. Researchers Mleckzo and Kington (2013) believed that parental engagement in schools will increase when principals create a vision for their school that focuses on the parents’ role in the education of their child. These researchers also claimed that when principals’ practice distributed school leadership, and involved parents and teachers as well as members of the community, they became more successful in improving parental engagement (Mleckzo & Kingston, 2013). The role of the principal is important in involving and empowering all

stakeholders in the decision making of the school especially as it relates to parental engagement.

School leadership has moved well beyond the authoritative model where the principal makes the decisions. Effective administrators understand that leadership must be shared among staff members and parents in order to take advantage of critical expertise and perspectives, and to build a genuine sense of collaboration. (Education Alliance, 2008, p. 9)

Principals have a responsibility to build capacity and to develop teacher leaders in their building who will collaborate with all stakeholders in ensuring that the school's vision of developing a vigorous parental engagement program is implemented.

According to Sergiovanni (2007), a transformational leadership style that includes shared decision making and collaboration by all stakeholders as they work towards a common vision can lead to positive changes in schools that support student achievement and academic success. The education system has an environment that relies heavily on testing and test scores for accountability reasons. However, Pepper (2010) believed that if principals do not receive guidance in school operations or support for capacity building, they may feel that they are solely responsible for all academic programs and for the total school operations. According to Pepper, principals might, therefore, adopt a more authoritative leadership approach where they make all the decisions concerning instructional programs, curriculum and all other activities at the school. Lezotte and McKee (2006) and Glasser (1998) stated that this type of leadership style in which the principal does not accept any kind of input from other stakeholders is ineffective and it's

quite difficult for any principal to sustain this over a long period of time. Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) concluded that school leadership is very important and while it is second only to classroom teachers, both are significant factors that contribute to student achievement. These researchers have identified three major or core practices of successful leadership in defining transformational leadership. These include (a) principal and staff members develop and implement goals in achieving a shared vision for the school, (b) capacity building for faculty and staff and allowing them to use their expertise in decision making , and (c) a commitment to changing organizational characteristics, to create a collaborative environment and to promote a positive school culture.

Teachers' Perceptions of Parental Engagement

Teachers' perceptions relate to how important or effective they believe each component of parental involvement is to them as teachers, what impact they believe their perceptions have on students' achievement and how much they value and encourage parental engagement. Teachers have varying perceptions on parent teacher communication, teacher parent conferencing, parents assisting with homework and parents being involved in school activities. Their perceptions often times influence whether or not parents might become involved and the parents' level of engagement and whether or not or to what degree teachers really place an emphasis on the significance of parental engagement.

Schools usually promote parental engagement with families and communities. However, for effective parental engagement to take place, school administrators as well

as teachers must offer their full support for meaningful parental engagement (National PTA, 2000) and (Epstein et al., 1997). School and family relationships are the foundation for effective parental engagement. The role of the teacher in building this partnership is an integral component of parental engagement. However some studies have revealed that the teachers' perceptions may affect the level of parental engagement. Baum and Swick, (2008) believed that some teachers may have negative attitudes toward cooperating and engaging with the parents because of preconceived conceptions about the parents. Research also suggests that some schools, administrators and teachers may not have received adequate and effective training in promoting improved parental engagement (Baum & Swick, 2008; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Ferrar & Ferrar, 2005). This can influence the teachers' perceptions of parental engagement and will ultimately help to determine whether or not parents become engaged.

Some teachers with pre conceived notions and past experiences have negative attitudes toward parental engagement in their children's education. From their research studies, Walde and Baker (1990) concluded that teachers believe that parents do not demonstrate enough concern to support the learning and education of their children. They say that teachers claim that parents do not care, some are irresponsible and they do not possess the skills that they need to help their children in school (Walde & Baker, 1990). Many of these teachers base their claims on the experiences they have encountered with some parents who fail to attend conferences or to be involved in school activities. As a result, some teachers develop negative attitudes towards parents with regards to their level of parental engagement. Williams and Stallworth (1983) discovered that while most

educators agree on the importance of parental involvement and its benefits, many of them believe that parents should serve in roles such as attending PTA, participating in booster clubs and attending fundraisers. They argued that parents were more interested in accepting roles in leadership and decision making and in helping to evaluate their children's learning than in just attending school activities.

School Climate

School Climate refers to, "the quality and character of school life; school climate is based on patterns of people's experiences of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures" (Cohen, McCabe, Michellia, & Pickeral, 2009, p. 180). It also includes the physical, as well as the psychological, aspect of a school and it can affect not just instruction but the level of parental and community engagement. The National School Climate Council (2007) defined school climate as "norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally and physically safe" (p. 4). According to the National School Climate Council, there are five components of school climate: this includes safety, teaching and learning interpersonal relationships, institutional environment and staff relationships. Safety includes the rules and regulations and the physical and emotional safety of all stakeholders. Teaching and learning relates to the provision in place to support students' learning and academic success. Interpersonal relationships refer to respect for diversity that will allow everyone to feel welcome and participate in school activities and to demonstrate respect and fairness to all. Institutional environment is concerned with the connectedness of the physical environment and staff

relationships include how school leaders and administrators relate to teachers and other staff and how they foster meaningful relationships.

A positive school climate is considered essential to school reform and is beneficial to improving students' academics, behavioral, mental and social outcomes (Thapa, Cohen, Higgins-D'Alessandro, & Guffy, 2012). Research has shown that a positive school climate can lower students' risk to factors like alcohol and drug use, bullying, violent behavior, fewer school suspensions, and harassment (Lee, Cornell, Gregory, & Fan, 2011; Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2013; La Russo, Romer, & Selman, 2008). A school with a positive school climate can affect students' motivation and can contribute to students increased achievement as well as improved attendance (Brand, Felner, Shim, Seitsinger, & Dumas, 2003; Stewart, 2008).

Povey et al. (2016) believed that school climate is a vital aspect of building parent-school partnerships and promoting parental engagement in a child's learning. School climate can promote positive parental engagement or it can have a negative impact on whether or not or to what extent parents become engaged in their children's education. According to James Griffith (1998), "Organizational characteristics such as the school's climate and its empowerment of parents, have been shown to be relevant dimensions in describing parent school relationships" (p. 54). While the school climate can impact several factors at the school including the physical and emotional aspects of students it also has a significant effect on parents and members of the community who visit the school. A warm and welcoming school environment where everyone is made to feel accepted is one attribute that can influence parents' decisions as to their level of

engagement in school. When school leaders create a positive climate that sends a clear message to parents that they value their contributions, this will ultimately promote improved school home partnerships and higher levels of parental engagement.

Schools' Use of Technology in Communicating with Parents

The school's use of technology in communicating with parents includes the use of various technological methods that can reach parents regardless of their location and parents can respond in a timely manner. This can include telephone calls, emails, text messages, school websites, videoconferencing, class websites, Facebook, podcasts, and newsletters. An effective method of building home school relationships and improving parental engagement is by promoting two way communications. Barriers continue to exist that hamper the development of partnerships because of time constraints on the part of the parents. The use of technology, therefore, presents a very viable and proactive way of communicating with parents and families concerning the academic performance of their students. Rogers and Wright (2008) explained that "technology offers the middle school parent the means to actively participate in the child's education without being visible in the school and thus fostering adolescent independence in a supportive environment" (p. 1). Technology is an effective tool that administrators and educators can use to develop and maintain partnerships with parents, families and the community.

Technology is a crucial tool that schools can use to foster improved parent teacher communication. Educators should therefore utilize technology in collaborating and communicating with parents in meaningful ways that will eliminate the challenges and barriers that parents and teachers face in terms of time and distance. In addition, it will

also encourage more active participation by parents and when there is effective communication, it will enhance the support for students' learning by both parents and teachers. It is sometimes very difficult for parents to obtain information from their children about homework, grades, and progress reports. It becomes even more challenging for older students to communicate with their parents, especially middle school and high school students. Parents are therefore seeking out other ways of getting vital information about what happened at school and how their children are performing. The use of school and classroom web sites encourage and promote meaningful two way communication between the school and the home and it is also an avenue to keep the community informed of school activities (Bigalow, 2003; Solomon & Andres, 1998). Homework hotlines and online student management portals also provide parents and families with the opportunity to stay abreast of homework requirements and students' progress (Ammann, 2001; Fish, 2003). Technology is an effective tool that can maintain and promote regular and consistent communication between families and the school and it will contribute to shared learning experiences.

Parents' Perception of Parental Engagement

Parents' perceptions of parental engagement are shaped by their beliefs about schooling, by their own experiences and how they perceive their role as parents. Researchers Barr and Saltmarsh (2014) conducted studies and their findings suggest that parents are more likely to be engaged in the education of their children if they perceive the principal as welcoming and supportive of their involvement. On the other hand, these parents are hesitant to become engaged when they perceive the principal as being

inaccessible, dismissive and not interested in promoting their involvement. Parents' perceptions are also influenced by whether or not they feel valued by the school and in the education of their children.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2007) explained that while parental involvement contributes to improved school outcomes for elementary and middle school students, much less information is available concerning the factors that motivate parents to become involved. Parents' perceptions of parental involvement and their level of engagement can be attributed to various factors. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) and Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Wilkins, et al. (2005) provided a theoretical framework from which parents' perceptions of parental engagement and the indicators for their involvement can be studied. They proposed three major sources of parental motivation for involvement. According to their research, they have identified psychological motivators, parents' perceptions of invitation to involvement from others, and finally that the parent believes that their life contexts will enable involvement (Hoover-Dempsey et al. 1995, 1997, 2005). The authors explained that the research describes the psychological aspect as the parents having active construction roles and a positive sense of self efficacy to become involved in their children's education.

Hoover-Dempsey et al. (1995, 1997, and 2005) claimed that when parents receive specific invitations from the teacher and the child and when the school has a welcoming climate and a warm environment they are more willing to become involved. Their research also makes the conclusion that parents' decisions to become involved will

depend on their perceptions of whether or not they believe they have the knowledge and the skills as well as the time and energy to help their children.

One central aspect of Hoover-Dempsey's et al. (1995, 1997, 2005) parental involvement model has to do with the personal motivators of the parents. They believe that the parents' perceptions and motivations for involvement are affected by the social systems they belong to. These systems include their own families and their educational experiences during their early schooling. It comprises of the family systems that the parents currently belong to as well as the recent experiences they have encountered in their children's school systems. Family culture also plays a major role in parents' perceptions of their roles in supporting their children's education. Some parents might not be willing to become involved because they do not have a high value on the education of their children and they believe that the school should be run by educational professionals and not by parents (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991). According to a study by Baker, Kessler-Sklar, Piotrkowski, & Parker (1999), parents of low income or minority children have fewer opportunities to meet teachers and communicate with them concerning their children's progress in school. These barriers can be attributed to transportation issues, financial challenges and child care. Minority, low income and less educated parents' cultural differences may create discrepancies between the school and the home and this may cause a breakdown in communication. As a result, these parents may experience tensions, they might feel intimidated by the teacher and the school and therefore they may become discouraged from being involved in their children's schooling (Baker et al., 1999; Eccles & Harold, 1993).

School Culture

School culture has to do with the practices, beliefs, attitudes and the relationships that affect how a school functions. School culture develops over a period of time and it reflects the rituals, traditions and shared values of administrators, educators, students, parents, and members of the community as they work together. The school organization can be identified by how its school culture mirrors the shared ideas, assumptions, values, and principles that help to identify the institution and provide the norms and standards for how everyone should behave. School administrators, teachers, parents and students all play a role in helping to shape the culture of a school. School culture also refers to the policies, written and unwritten rules that govern the institution.

In order for a school leader to create a positive school culture that influences student achievement and enhances improved parental engagement he or she must first recognize how complex the school culture is. Stoll (2002) has described school culture as a critical aspect of education that is very complicated and oftentimes neglected by school administrators in their quest for school improvement. School leaders must be willing to address the conscious and unconscious long held beliefs and values that teachers and staff hold that sometimes work against school reform initiatives. Each school has a unique set of values and cultural practices that a school leader must recognize as having an impact on the school's operations. "A school's culture is characterized by deeply rooted traditions, values, and beliefs, some of which are common across schools and some of which are unique and embedded in a particular school's history and location" (Kruse & Louis, 2009).

According to Stoll (2002), culture describes how each person views the world through a set of lens and their culture often acts as a screen through which they observe how things happen. Stoll also explained that within a social organization culture provides a sense of identity and reality and offers support for its members. Schools have their own unique culture, a way of life that is shaped by its history and the people who function within it. Stoll also made the point that cultural change is influenced by the age of a school. He explained that in the early years of the school's operations, their culture is very explicit but as the school begins to age the culture is more implicit as it becomes embedded. In this case, he says that the culture is not easily understood, and therefore is more difficult for educational leaders to create and implement change (Stoll, 2002).

While there are several subcultures within a school, Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) identified four different kinds of school culture that explain how these cultures can significantly impact school improvement. According to Fullan and Hargreaves, teachers' cultures range from individualism or traditional where teachers work in isolation to a culture of collegiality where teachers collaborate and develop working relationships in planning and delivering effective lessons. Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) further classified school culture in two categories: a positive school culture and a toxic school culture. The authors defined a toxic school culture as one in which teachers focus on the negative aspects of the school environment and its operations and they use this as a scapegoat for the poor performance of students. On the other hand, they described a positive or effective school culture as one in which there is daily collaboration among teachers and administrators. Darling-Hammond (1997) argued that schools that have a

democratic structure and a collaborative culture will achieve higher gains in student achievement and will produce students that are better equipped with more skills than students who are from schools with traditional cultures. Fullan (1998) concluded that, student achievement increases substantially in schools with collaborative work cultures that foster a professional learning community among teachers and others focus continuously on improving instructional practice in light of student performance data, and link to standards and staff development support. (p. 8)

School leaders must encourage and increase parental involvement and develop effective communication with parents. Research was done by Ouellette, Briscoe, and Tyson (2004) who made the argument that school leaders must be more flexible when meeting with working parents and should promote a school environment where teachers are encouraged to communicate regularly with parents with regards to students' successes in academics and behavior. A national study of successful middle level schools was conducted by Valentine, Clark, Hackmann, and Petzko (2004) and their findings provided several indicators and insight into highly successful schools that demonstrated effective and collaborative school cultures. Some pertinent characteristics that they have reported include how teachers and administrators share a set of common beliefs that serve as a guide for their curriculum, programs, and practices and that they must have high expectations for students. Also, emphasis was placed on the principal's role as a collaborative leader that promotes collegiality among teachers that is focused on curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The school leader plays a critical role in

developing and implementing parental engagement strategies. According to Leithwood (2005), the principal helps to shape the nature of school culture and they are instrumental in leading school improvement.

Students' Attendance

Students' attendance remains a critical issue facing schools all across the nation and the goal of many schools is to reduce absenteeism among students. It becomes a major problem for children and adolescents who experience chronic absenteeism from school because it impacts their social, emotional and educational development (Haarman, 2011). Educators and researchers continue to explore ways to increase students attendance and on how parental engagement can improve students' attendance. Research shows that student attendance has an impact on student achievement and this suggests that students with better attendance score higher on achievement tests than their more frequently absent peers (Lamdin, 1996). High school students who drop out of school not only have a history of poor attendance throughout school but may also be withdrawn or not engaged in the education process for some time (Hickman, Bartholomew, & Mathwig (2007). According to Epstein and Sheldon (2002b), one effect of chronic absenteeism is negative consequences for both the student and the school. They explained that when students are not in school they have fewer opportunities to receive instruction and to learn the subject matter which is important for them to have improved academic performance and to succeed later in life. In addition to that, chronic absenteeism may affect a school learning environment in terms of its funding and resources which are connected to students' daily attendance.

Epstein and Sheldon (2002a) believed school leaders and educators as well as government officials place more focus on students who drop out of school than on their daily attendance. However, they offered the clarification that while dropping out of school might be regarded as a single event; it involves a process of absenteeism over a long period of time and students' disengagement from school. King, Ollendick, and Tonge (1995) made the argument that while absenteeism may be regarded as a short term condition that affects schools, prolonged absenteeism during the childhood years is a predictor of lasting concerns into adulthood. They claimed that delinquency, school dropout and occupational and relationship problems might result from severe absenteeism in schools. Research has shown that children who drop out of school may also experience economic deprivation and social, marital, occupational and psychiatric problems (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014). Epstein and Sheldon (2002b) explained that if high schools are to effectively decrease the number of students who drop out, school leaders must be willing to utilize resources to develop and implement programs at the elementary and middle school level to prevent students from becoming withdrawn and disengaged in school.

Experts in the field believe that parental engagement can have positive effects on students' attendance. "In schools where students have attendance problems, educators may need to go beyond the school building to involve families in reducing absenteeism" (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002b, p. 309). According to a study conducted by John Hopkins University, it found that a family engagement partnership in DC public schools was connected to an increase in students' attendance and literacy achievement. Students

whose parents were involved in the program had better attendance and improved literacy achievement compared to those students whose parents were not involved. Studies have been conducted and the conclusion was made that parental involvement activities do have an impact on student attendance. Some researchers have made a direct link between student attendance and family practices that include parent child discussions, parental monitoring, and parent participation at the school and PTA membership (Astone & McLanahan, 1991; Lee, 1994; McNeal, 1999).

Epstein and Sheldon (2002b) of Johns Hopkins University conducted a longitudinal study and collected data on schools' rates of daily student attendance and chronic absenteeism. The researchers examined specific partnership practices that schools developed and implemented to improve and or sustain student attendance. Epstein and Sheldon, in partnership with the National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University, collected data from 18 schools including 12 elementary and 6 secondary schools. In analyzing the data, the authors evaluated school programs that are focused on improving students' daily attendance. The study made the conclusion that if schools implement these broad strategies they are more likely to improve student attendance and reduce chronic absenteeism. The strategies include (a) taking a comprehensive approach to attendance with activities that involve students, families, and the community, (b) using more positive involvement activities than negative or punishing activities, and (c) sustaining a focus on improving attendance over time (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002b). Some of the recommendations they have made to increase students' attendance include schools developing positive connections with families and

implementing practices to improve home school communication and recognizing and rewarding students' positive attendance results.

Students' Behavior

When parents are involved in their children's education, students tend to have improved conduct, self-esteem and a more positive attitude towards learning and school (Chen, 2008). Epstein and Sheldon (2002b) conducted research and their findings revealed that schools that had an improved quality in family and parental engagement partnerships experienced a decline in students having disciplinary and behavior issues. Their findings confirmed that schools that develop positive partnerships with families and the community and implement parental engagement activities will experience an improvement in students' behavior and discipline. There are many causes of students' misbehavior in the classroom and in most cases the underlying reasons are completely unrelated to the current classroom situation. Research by Harris (2006) suggested that the relationships that students experience with their peers, adults in the school, and family members and their community do influence their behavior in the classroom.

Research that was conducted by Bowen and Bowen (1999) concluded that students who are exposed to danger in their neighborhood may experience negative school outcomes in terms of attendance and behavior. Some of these students are more prone to act out in school and display negative behavior tendencies in the classroom. Jensen (2002) made the point that students who are raised in poverty are faced with various challenges that their more affluent counterparts do not have to tend to. Jensen explained that these students suffer from social and emotional instability which will

affect their overall behavior both inside and outside the classroom. The students from low socioeconomic status environments are forced to acquire certain traits and to develop certain lifestyles that are needed to survive and these are carried over into the school. These practices will inadvertently become contributing factors to their poor behavior. Students who experience social isolation, socioeconomic challenges and are from at risk neighborhoods are more prone to display aggression and negative behavior in the classroom (McAdams, 2002). According to Jensen (2002), children who are from low income households often fail to develop healthy relationships and positive social skills that are needed not only in the classroom but throughout their entire lives.

Epstein (1987, 1995) in her research discussed three contexts as “spheres of influence” that have an impact on students’ outcomes. She described how the school, family, and community context influence the development of students. Epstein further explained that these spheres of influence oftentimes overlap and this is dependent on the types of communication and the collaboration and parental activities that exist between school staff, parents, families, and the community. Henderson and Mapp (2002) concluded that students whose parents are more involved in their education are more likely to achieve higher grades, attend school regularly, have better social skills, improved behavior and will adapt well to school. Epstein (1995) concluded that educators play a crucial role in deciding how and to what extent family, school, and community contexts overlap. She made recommendations that schools should utilize the framework of the six categories of family and community involvement activities to improve collaboration and effective home school partnerships. This framework includes helping

families to establish supportive home environments, develop and implement effective home school communication, recruit and organize families to volunteer at school, provide families with learning support to help their children, provide opportunities for families to become involved in the decision making at the school and finally to make community resources available for families. Epstein made the argument that these parental engagement activities will not only produce improved students' outcomes in achievement but will also result in improved behavior.

The Level of Parental Engagement in Title I Urban Middle schools

The federal government has developed a systemic program to promote Family Engagement in schools and they require all schools that receive Title I Funds to be in full compliance. This Title I Parental Involvement Program is designed to guide school and district staff, through the process of developing and maintaining an effective Title I Parental Involvement Program in public schools (Georgia Department of Education [GADOE], 2016). Schools are held accountable for students' success and the federal government have provided mandates that schools must comply to if they receive federal funds for education. According to the U. S. Department of Education (2016), the new Title I Part A Program is designed to help close the achievement gap between disadvantaged and minority students and their peers and to ensure that schools are investing in the children with a focus on improving student outcomes. The federal government has emphasized the importance of parental involvement activities to support student outcomes and they have designed specific provisions within the plan to ensure that schools are developing partnerships with families. Some schools have interpreted and

used the federal guidelines as a blue print to create programs that encourage and foster parental activities and to implement effective two way communication between the home and the school.

Students' Academic Achievement

Parent Involvement and student achievement remain national topics in the debate on school reform and education and how to close the achievement gap between minority students and their peers. For many years, government policies have focused on the benefits of parental involvement to students' improved outcomes. Parent involvement was a major component of President Obama's "Race to the Top" educational initiative, it represented a keystone aspect of former President Bush's No Child Left Behind initiative, it was the cornerstone of former President Clinton's 1996 Elementary and Secondary Act and the cornerstone of former President Reagan's Goals 2000 (McNeal, 2014). These government administrations have consistently emphasized that schools must create meaningful and lasting school reforms that focus on the role of parental involvement in achieving improved student achievement, attendance and behavior. Research was conducted in studies of early childhood, elementary, middle, and high schools and the evidence was conclusive that efforts to improve student outcomes are more effective when the family is actively engaged in their education (Henderson & Berla, 1994). Studies have confirmed that there are many benefits to children and adolescents in terms of achieving positive learning outcomes, academic success in school and their overall success in life (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

The New Wave of Evidence report by Henderson and Mapp (2002) synthesized research on parental involvement over the last decade and their report concluded that students who have involved parents are more likely to earn higher grades and test scores, enroll in higher-level programs, be promoted, pass their classes, earn credits, attend school regularly and graduate and go on to postsecondary education. The principal and the school play an integral role in establishing parental involvement programs that seek to promote improved parental engagement with the focus on increasing student academic achievement. The National PTA recommends that schools not only develop parent/family involvement programs that recognize and welcome parents as partners in schools but more importantly that these programs provide opportunities for parents to assume roles in the decision making process that affect children and families. The New Wave of Evidence Report (2002) also made the point that schools must recognize and respond to parents' concerns; they should value the contributions of families and treat them as partners in the education of their children if they want to improve and sustain student achievement.

Izzo et al. (1999) conducted a three-year study of 1,200 urban students in a New England district and he made the conclusion that parent involvement, both at home and at school had a positive effect on student achievement. Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez, and Bloom (1993) in their research found that the home environment is a major factor not only in determining the academic success of the students but also in their level of achievement and how much interest they demonstrate in their learning. While more research has been conducted on parental involvement in the elementary years, studies

have also been done on parental involvement in middle and high school and the effect on student achievement. Wang and Sheikh-Khalil's (2013) study examined the effects of different types of parental involvement on student achievement. The study also tested whether parental involvement influenced adolescent outcomes by increasing their academic engagement in school. Their conclusion was that parental involvement is a major predictor of adolescent academic success and mental health.

Parents' Use of the Parent Center

The Parent Center in Title I schools is a safe and inclusive environment that provides resources for parents so they can assist their children in completing assignments and projects. Parent Centers also offer workshops in parenting skills and offer training to parents in various areas. A Parent Center may be staffed by a teacher, a social worker, a parent advocate or a parent whose goal among others is to help parents understand how to navigate the education system. How often parents use the Parent Center depends on a number of factors and chief among them are the resources that the school makes available. These include books, materials, videos, dictionaries, and other learning tools. Some Parent Centers also have interpreters and translators to assist parents of English Language Learners in communicating with the school and their child's teacher. Some Parent Centers also have computers for parents to use and check their children's grades and academic progress.

Schools' Funding of Parent Centers

Most Parent Centers are funded by Federal Title I programs. Schools and districts receive funds based on the number of children who receive free and reduced school

meals. There are 64 schools operating Title I programs in the school district under study. Each Title I school program has an on-site Parent Center that is facilitated by a parent liaison. Some Parent Centers that receive adequate funding make it a priority to provide training and assistance to parents who are seeking employment. Parents can attend workshops that help in developing interview skills and training in parenting services. In some cases, Parent Centers have an employment specialist who helps parents in searching for and applying for jobs.

Summary

There is an abundance of literature on parental engagement and how it influences students' outcomes. The existing literature and its research continue to drive policies that relate to parental engagement at the school, local, state, and even federal levels. The literature makes convincing arguments for the advantages of improved parental engagement and the gains that schools will realize in increased student outcomes when they form partnerships with parents, families, and the community. There are also a variety of factors that impact parental engagement and the literature supports several of those features. This includes school culture, principal leadership style, school climate, teachers' perceptions of parental engagement, Federal Title I Guidelines, and parents' perceptions of parental engagement.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

Parental engagement is regarded as a vital component toward the success of students in education. There is no doubt that most parents want their children to succeed in school. A critical question therefore is, why aren't more parents engaged in their children's education? The fact is that the level of parents' engagement in their children's education is influenced by a number of factors. This study examines the factors that impact parental engagement in two Title I Urban Middle Schools. Chapter III provides the theoretical framework for this qualitative research. First, it offers an explanation of the research design that is used to conduct this study. Secondly, the definition of variables and other terms that are pertinent to this study are highlighted. Next, this chapter explores the applicable theories and how they are aligned with the variables. The theories include Transformational Leadership, Social Cognitive Theory, and Cultural Capital Theory. Joyce Epstein's (2010) Framework for Parental Involvement is also presented in this chapter. Finally, this chapter provides an explanation of the relationship among the variables.

Theory of Variables

Transformational Leadership

As societies continue to develop and change, school leaders must also adapt to the changing roles in education and take on new responsibilities to lead 21st century schools. According to Fullan (2001), as society becomes more complex, school leaders must also become more sophisticated in order to be effective in influencing student outcome.

Transformational leadership is a style of leadership where a leader works with associates to identify the changes that are needed in the organization and together they create a vision of shared values and purpose and with commitment they work towards transforming the organization. James V. Downton was the first person to introduce the idea of transformational leadership and years later in 1978, James Macgregor Burns, a presidential biographer and political scientist, developed the concept. According to Burns (1978), "Transformational leadership is a process in which leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of morale and motivation" (p. 5).

Transformational leadership is based on a leader's personality, his beliefs, characteristic traits, and how he is able to inspire and motivate his followers so they all work towards a common goal of benefitting the organization or the community.

According to Northouse (2001), a very simple definition of Transformational Leadership is how well a leader can influence people to want to change, to get them to change, to influence them to improve, and the ability to get them to want to be led.

Transformational Leaders create positive changes in the individuals that they lead and their overall goal is to inspire and develop their followers into leaders.

Burns (1978) established two different concepts of leadership—Transactional Leadership and Transformational Leadership—and they are both exclusive to each other. Burns' theory of Transformational Leadership is in stark contrast to transactional leadership. Transactional leadership is focused on exchanges of rewards and punishments between the leader and the follower. Transformational leadership, on the other hand, is when the leader values his subordinates' beliefs and needs and motivates them to achieve their goals. Transactional leaders are not interested in changing the culture of an organization but instead they accept and work within the organization in a give and take mode with their followers. On the opposite end of the spectrum are Transformational Leaders who are always seeking ways to change the organizational culture, the perceptions, values, expectations and aspirations of their followers.

Another researcher, Bernard Bass (1985) further developed Burns' Transformational Leadership Theory and explained the psychological aspect of it. In today's society, this is described as Bass' Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass, 1985). Bass tried to explain how transformational leaders impact their followers' motivation and performance. Individuals who follow transformational leaders develop trust, loyalty, admiration and respect and these qualities along with the leader's influence impact followers to work harder for the benefit of the collective unit instead of personal gain (Bass, 1985). Bass' Leadership Theory describes four elements of transformational leadership that include idealized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence (Bass & Avolio 1994). Idealized consideration is concerned with how the leader acts as a coach and attends to the needs of his followers.

Intellectual stimulation is how effective is the leader in challenging his followers to take risks and develop their own creativity. Inspirational motivation is how well the leader can inspire his followers and motivate them to buy into his vision. Finally, through idealized influence, the leader becomes a role model for his followers and he sets high ethical behavior and garners the respect and loyalty of his followers (Bass, 2008).

Transformational leadership has impacted the research on organizational leadership and researchers continue to explore and conduct studies in this field. This theory that was first developed by Burns (1978) and later improved by Bass (1985, 1998) and others (Avolio & Bass, 1988; Bass & Avolio, 1994) has become a leadership style that is practiced in a wide cross section of government organizations and educational institutions. Although Burns (1978) developed Transformational Leadership Theory specifically for political leaders, this model has now become applicable to the field of education. Bass and Avolio (1994) and Leithwood (1994) developed the transformational leadership model for education, with a primary focus on school principals. Leithwood formulated seven characteristics of transformational leaders that are aligned to education and to school leaders: (a) building school vision and establishing goals, (b) creating a productive school culture, (c) providing intellectual stimulation, (d) offering individualized support, (e) modeling best practices and important organizational values, (f) demonstrating high-performance expectations, and (g) developing structures to foster participation in school decisions.

Transformational Leadership Theory is, therefore, aligned with seven of the variables that are in this study. This includes principal's leadership style, what is the level

of engagement parents have in Title I funded schools, student achievement, parents' perceptions of parental engagement, school culture, school climate, and teachers' perceptions of parental engagement. While transformational leadership is very fittingly aligned to principal's leadership style, all seven variables are connected to transformational leadership in some way. Leadership in education does not rest within one person or one office but can be found throughout the school and with different stakeholders all working towards one common goal. According to Mulford (2003), "One of the most consistent findings from studies of effective school leadership is that authority to lead need not be located in the person of the leader but can be dispersed within the school between and among people" (p. 2). This research under study very clearly exposes and describes how the Transformational Leadership Theory applies to the factors that affect parental engagement in middle schools and the role that the teachers and parents play in forming school and family partnerships. While the principal commands a central role in school leadership and promoting parental engagement, this theory brings to the forefront that no one person is embedded with all the authority to lead an institution of learning but instead everyone has an important role to play.

Social Cognitive Theory

Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory is used in psychology, communication, and education. Bandura, a psychologist, conducted a series of studies on human behavior and motivation in 1961 and 1963 and from that he later developed the Social Learning Theory. During his research and in his writing in (1977b), Bandura made the assertion that the Social Learning Theory demonstrated a direct relationship between a person's

perceived self-efficacy and the change in their behavior. Self-efficacy has to do with how well an individual has mastered a specific skill. It also relates to the idea that people make decisions on how to behave based on their belief system and how capable they feel in accomplishing their goal and not so much in their knowledge or their skills (Pajares, 2002). According to Bandura (1977a), there are four components of self-efficacy: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological states. Bandura expanded on his research in 1986 and renamed his original theory, The Social Cognitive Theory. Bandura believed that cognition plays a vital role in the performance of human behaviors and he therefore stressed the word cognitive in the new theory (Bandura, 1985).

The Social Cognitive Theory explains that observing, modeling and imitating are important concepts to the causes of how or why people behave a certain way. Bandura (1977b) explained that “most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action” (p. 22). Consequently, human behavior is a combination of personal experiences, behavioral actions and environmental influences (Bandura, 1986). Parents make decisions as to their level of parental engagement based on their personal experiences, their observations from others and how well they model behaviors. Bandura (1998) proposed a triad model for Social Cognitive Theory that includes an interaction between the individual, behavior and the environment. Bandura is propositioning this model of Social Cognitive Theory, also referred to as reciprocal causation model to explain that people are not just reactive

organisms but instead they have the capability to make changes to their behavior and their environment. This model is relevant to students in a classroom who sometimes learn by observing others and subsequently this modeling as well as their environment can influence their behavior. Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory can be appropriately applied to seven of the variables in this study. Student achievement, teachers' perceptions of parental engagement, school culture, parents' perceptions of parental engagement, parents' use of the Parent Center and school climate are aligned with this theory. This theory helps to explain the dynamics of human motivation and behavior and how the interdependence of several factors including the environment can impact the level of parental engagement in Title I Urban Middle Schools.

Cultural Capital Theory

French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, developed the Theory of Cultural Capital in 1979 and explained how this concept provides one with cultural knowledge, power, and influence that helps in navigating life experiences. Cultural capital is the accumulation of knowledge, behaviors and skills that one can tap into to demonstrate one's cultural competence, and thus one's social status or standing in society (Cole, 2016). In his original research Bourdieu (1979) expounded on the fact that an accumulation of cultural capital could highlight class differences among groups of people. He went on further to demonstrate how factors of race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, religion, and age can influence people in terms of how much knowledge or resources they have access to (Bourdieu, 1979). Cultural capital basically refers to the non-financial assets, the qualities and cultural knowledge that people have and use for social mobility. Cultural

capital, therefore, has an impact on the social system in society and can have positive or negative influences on people, thus placing individuals either at an advantage or disadvantage. Cultural capital is used as an exchange mechanism where people of a higher social class can use it to receive benefits in education or their careers or for their social status in society.

Bourdieu's Cultural Capital Theory has garnered much attention in education and this has caused extensive research to be conducted on the topic. The sociologist Kingston (2001) explained the connection between education and cultural capital and he maintains that education provides a clear passageway to economic success. He claimed that people who are socially privileged or those who have a lot of cultural capital usually receive better grades in school, perform better on standardized tests and earn higher degrees (Kingston, 2001). Kingston argued that since the relationship between education and cultural capital is so significant it raises concerns about the equality of the education system and how it affects the different levels of students' academic performance.

Bourdieu (1974) said the following:

It [education] is, in fact, one of the most effective means of perpetuating the existing social pattern, as it both provides an apparent justification for social inequalities and gives recognition to the cultural heritage, that is, to a social gift treated as a natural one. (p. 32)

Not only does Kingston agree with Bourdieu on the extenuation of the disparities in the education system by one's cultural capital but he further highlights the serious implications that it has on the fairness of the social systems (Kingston, 2001).

Some cultural theorists claim that a person's level of educational success is not regarded solely as an individual achievement but that schools reward them based on their high levels of cultural capital and this in turn helps to propel them to become successful (Kingston, 2001). There are several theorists who have scrutinized Bourdieu's Cultural Capital Theory and have raised questions concerning the role that schools play in reproducing cultural capital, the extent to which individuals accomplish academic success and the degree to which schools perpetuate the cycle of reproduction of their cultural capital (Kingston, 2001). Bourdieu's (1979) Cultural Capital Theory has highlighted the fact that middle class families provide benefits to their children in terms of cultural capital and that schools reproduce and transmit this cultural knowledge that puts these students at an advantage. Therefore, Bourdieu's Cultural Capital Theory is relevant to this study on Parental Engagement in Middle Schools and how specific factors influence the level of parental engagement. Cultural Capital Theory relates to eleven of the variables in this qualitative study. This includes Teachers' Perception of Parental Engagement, School Climate, Schools' Use of Technology in Communicating with Parents, Parents' Perception of Parental Engagement, School Culture, Students' Attendance, Students' Discipline, Students' Academic Achievement, Parents' Use of The Parent Center and Schools' Funding of the Parent Center.

Cultural Capital Theory begins in the home with the quantity and quality of resources that families have to provide opportunities for their children. This pattern of transmission is carried forward and reproduced in the schools by rewarding students who have cultural capital. On the other hand, parents and families who lack cultural capital are

unable to adequately provide their children with the experiences that they need to be successful in life. In addition to that, the education system does not provide these students with opportunities that would make up for their deficiency and enable their success because they reward those students from middle class homes who already have cultural capital. This theory manifests itself in so many ways starting with the students, their parents and families and their educational level and social status. Bourdieu's Cultural Capital Theory is also aligned with the education system and the disparities that exist, the resources that are available in school and in the community and how school leadership contributes to this vicious cycle.

Joyce Epstein's Model for Parental Involvement

Epstein of the Johns Hopkins University conducted extensive research on parental engagement and has developed a framework consisting of six components (see Figure 1).

Parenting: Schools should assist families by helping them to create a home environment where they can help their children with homework. Schools should also establish training courses for parents to help them develop their own life skills in literacy, obtaining their General Equivalency Diploma (GED) and college credit as well as services in health and nutrition.

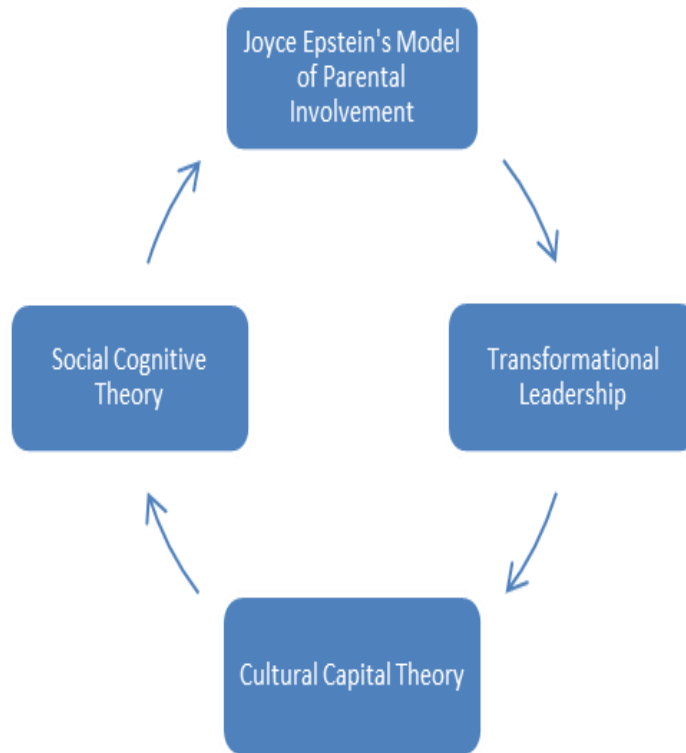


Figure 1. Relationship among theories and Epstein’s Parental Involvement Model.

Communicating: Effective home school communication is highly important. This will allow parents to be informed of their children’s academic progress. Schools should understand the significance of getting parents involved in parent teacher conferences and they should also provide translators for parents of English Language Learners.

Volunteering: Schools should deliberately provide opportunities for parents to become involved at the school. Parents should be recruited to assist teachers, to volunteer at meetings and other activities at the school.

Learning at Home: Parents need the assistance and support in setting goals for their students and planning for college or career. Schools should also help parents and

families understand homework policies and the curriculum. Some families will also need assistance on ideas of how they can help can help their students with learning skills required in their coursework.

Decision Making: Families should be actively involved in the decision making of their children's education. They should be invited by the school to become part of the leadership team in advocating for education on behalf of their children.

Collaborating with the Community: Schools must seek community resources that will benefit families and their children. They should also collaborate with government agencies, and other community organizations to provide programs and services for students.

Relationship among the Variables

Parental engagement has received support from educational policies and practices as well as administrators, educators, parents, families and the community. Studies have shown the effects of parental engagement and how it can be used to help close the achievement gap. However, in some case, stakeholders do not fully recognize or understand how theories and research are used to provide explanations as to how and at what level parents become engaged. Therefore, in this study four theories were explored to demonstrate how they are aligned with the independent variables. More specifically these theories provide valuable insights into the relationship between the independent variables and the theories and their influence on parental engagement (see Figure 2).

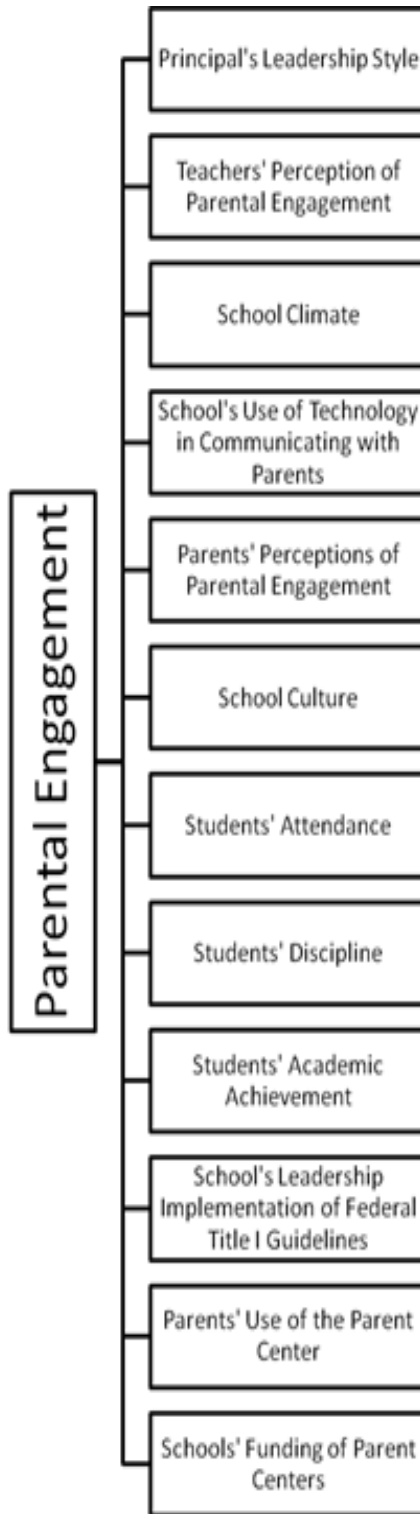


Figure 2. Relationship among the variables.

Transformational Leadership Theory applies to seven variables including principal's leadership style, what is the level of engagement parents have in Title I funded schools, student achievement, parents' perceptions of parental engagement, school culture, school climate and teachers' perceptions of parental engagement. Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1999) can be appropriately applied to seven of the variables in this study. Student achievement, teachers' perceptions of parental engagement, school culture, parents' perceptions of parental engagement, Parents' use of the Parent Center and school climate are aligned with this theory.

This study explores the relationship between the three theories and the variables. Cultural Capital Theory relates to 11 of the variables in this qualitative study and it illustrates the relationship that exists between parental engagement and the independent variables. This include Teachers' Perception of Parental Engagement, School Climate, Schools' use of Technology in Communicating with Parents, Parents' Perception of Parental Engagement, School Culture, Students' Attendance, Students' Discipline, Students' Academic Achievement, Teacher and School Resources, Parents' Use of The Parent Center, and Schools' Funding of the Parent Center.

Finally, Epstein's (2010) School-Family-Community Partnership is a research based model that highlights the relationship that exists between schools, families and the community and it is used to create parental engagement activities. The influence of this model goes beyond the community and the school house and has been used by government officials and educators to design and implement educational policy with regards to parental engagement.

Summary

This chapter highlighted the three theories of Transformational Leadership, Social Cognitive Theory, and Cultural Capital Theory that are pertinent to this qualitative study. It explains how the theories are aligned with the independent variables and the relationship that exists among them. This chapter also illustrated the connection between Joyce Epstein's Parental Involvement Model and the independent variables in this study.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As parental engagement emerges as an urban school reform initiative, some research has been conducted to provide explanations of the factors that do impact the level of parental engagement. Some of these initiatives have been used in an effort to transform failing schools, to improve student achievement and to create changes in the culture and relationships within schools (Lewis, 1997; Murnane & Levy, 1996). However, it is important to conduct further research to study the factors that do influence parental engagement in Title I Urban Middle Schools.

A qualitative descriptive approach was adopted to conduct the research for this study. The study utilized a research framework of inquiry that includes a description of the setting, sampling procedures, and an explanation of how the location and the participants were selected. This chapter also provides descriptions of the instruments used for data collection and the procedures used in collecting the data. In addition, this study provides appropriate descriptions of the methods used to analyze the data and to explain how the researcher interpreted the findings.

Research Design

This research examined the impact of certain factors on parental engagement in two Title I Urban Middle Schools. This study was conducted using a qualitative

approach as the primary method of design. This qualitative design concentrated on the perceptions and actions of the participants and it helped to determine the meaning of certain aspects and dynamics in more realistic situations (Creswell, 2013). In other words, in this research, a qualitative case study allowed the researcher to collect detailed information about specific factors that affect the level of parental engagement in Title I Urban Middle Schools.

This research design allowed the researcher to address the research problem of the factors that influence parental engagement in Title I Urban Middle Schools. The researcher attempted to gather an understanding of the reasons or factors that affect the level of parental engagement in Title I Urban Middle Schools. It also provided insights into understanding how these factors create challenges or barriers to parents becoming involved in their children's education. This qualitative research helped to expose certain tendencies and beliefs as they relate to parental engagement. The first approach was qualitative and it included teacher and parents surveys that were transcribed by the researcher. The second data source was open ended qualitative interviews that were conducted with both principals and the Parent Center Liaisons at each middle school. The researcher also utilized a focus group of parents to discuss parental engagement activities at their schools. The researcher also conducted an analysis of several Title I documents as well as the Climate Star Rating for each school. This comparative case study research design of two Title I Urban Middle schools allowed the researcher to integrate all components of the study, to collect the data in a scientific manner and to analyze its findings and apply them to the research problem.

This triangulation of the study that included open ended interviews, surveys, a focus group and document analysis provided validity and reliability to the study. Reliability and validity are important to any research and they are often times considered as the “rigor” that is necessary for all kinds of research (Merriam, 1995). In other words, if a study is to be trusted and believed it must have reliability and validity. Reliability and validity are integral to the scientific aspect of any research. Reliability refers to the ability to repeat a study and obtain the same findings. Therefore, if a research study is conducted a second time it should provide the same results and this would indicate that the data are reliable. If other researchers perform the same study under the same conditions and they obtain the same results it would reinforce the reliability of the study and scientists would more readily accept the results. The validity of any research depends on whether or not the instrument accomplishes what it was supposed to and if a random sample can be generalized to a larger population. Therefore, reliability and validity are important principles of any research, they are integral to the scientific approach and they add credibility and trustworthiness to the study.

Description of the Setting

The two Title I Urban Middle Schools were chosen from an urban school district in Metropolitan Atlanta. This school system is one of the larger school systems in Georgia and one that has a very diverse student population. According to the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement (2016), the population at the first middle school, (School A) for school year 2016 – 2017 is 1,033 students. The school serves three grade levels and they are grades 6 -8. The student demographics include 96% minority students and

100% of the students are economically disadvantaged and they receive free and reduced lunch. The student population includes 488 female students and 545 male students, 168 students with disabilities and 108 students who are English Language Learners. The Georgia Governor's Office of Student Achievement provides the attendance rate at this school during school year 2016 -2017. This consists of 52.9% of the student population with 5 or fewer days of absence, 30.9% with 6 to 15 days absence and 16.3% of the student population missing 15 or more days of school. The Governor's Office of Student Achievement has also provided a report card on School A for school year 2016–2017. School A has a College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) score of 53.6% on the Georgia Milestones during school year 2016–2017. This is a state standardized test administered to all public schools in Georgia. This school's overall performance is higher than 5% of schools in the state and is lower than its district. The student academic growth is higher than 10% of schools in the state and lower than its district. The eighth grade students at School A have 45.9% of its students reading at or above the grade level target.

The second Title I Middle School used in this study (School B) has a population of 836 students of which 71% are minority students. There are three grade levels at this school and they are grades 6–8. According to the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (2016), students who receive free and reduced lunch account for 55% of the student population. The student population includes 428 female students and 408 male students, 146 students or 17% have disabilities and 13% or 110 students are English Language Learners. The Georgia Governor's Office of Student Achievement provides the

attendance rate at this school during school year 2016 -2017. This consists of 53.8% of the population with 5 or fewer days' absence, 35.8% with 6 to 15 days of absence and 10.4% with more than 15 days of absence. The Governor's Office of Student Achievement has also provided a report card on School B for school year 2016 –2017. School B has a College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) score of 71.1% on the Georgia Milestones during school year 2016 –2017. This is a state standardized test administered to all public schools in Georgia. The Governor's Office of Student Achievement reports that this Title I Middle School (School B's) overall performance is higher than 40% of schools in the state and is lower than its district. Its students' academic growth is higher than 36% of schools in the state and similar to its district. The percentage of 8th grade students that are reading at or above the grade level target at School B is 75.8%.

Sampling Procedures

The two Title I Urban Middle Schools were chosen from an urban school district in Metropolitan Atlanta. Middle schools that have a large student population and are regarded as diverse schools were selected. Also, schools were chosen based on their demographic of a high percentage of minority students. It was important to select middle schools that have Title I Parent Centers because this is important to collecting the pertinent data for this research. In order to obtain the data for this study, a representative sample of participants from both schools was randomly selected. Two principals, one from each of the middle schools participated in an open ended interview. The principals completed the interviews and this provided valuable data on Title I parent activities at the

school. The researcher used purposive sampling of teachers, and parents and this was representative of the target population. A random sample of teachers was used to complete surveys. Both Parent Center Liaisons, one from each of the middle schools were selected and they participated in an interview. Parents were required to complete surveys in order to yield useful data on parental engagement activities. A focus group that consisted of parents participated in a discussion on parental engagement activities. The researcher guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality to everyone who participated in this study. Additionally, all participants volunteered their time freely.

Working with Human Subjects

There is much concern about the protection of human subjects in any type of research. Therefore, there are certain rules and procedures that must be followed concerning the conduct of research involving human subjects. The researcher was very cognizant of all ethical considerations and followed all ethical norms concerning the participants during the research. Everyone who participated in the study was required to sign a form thereby giving consent for their voluntary participation. A letter was subsequently provided to all participants and it provided pertinent information on the purpose of the study and how the information that is obtained will be used.

First, the researcher ensured that none of the participants were subjected to any kind of harm. Secondly, all participants were treated with full respect and dignity as they participated in the study. The protection of the participants' privacy was taken into consideration and there was open, honest and transparent communication at all times between the researcher and the participants. Finally, there is a level of confidentiality and

trust that was established with the participants. Therefore, whatever information that was given by the participants in response to the interview questions and the surveys was held with high regards to confidentiality and at no time was their identity revealed.

Subsequently, that information was not disclosed to anyone but was used solely for the purpose of the study being conducted. Participants received letters that clearly explained that there was no financial benefit or transfer of monies between the researcher and the participants that would provide compensation for taking part in this study.

Instrumentation

The researcher ensured that the instruments chosen for data collection for this study were valid and reliable. Four types of instrumentation were used for this study—interviews, surveys, observations, and a focus group— and document analyses. In conducting research, there are several methods of interview design that the researcher can create in order to collect substantive and adequate data using a qualitative approach (Creswell, 2007). The first type of instrumentation that was utilized was a structured interview which is also referred to as a standardized open-ended interview. This form of interview allowed the interviewer to follow a structured pattern, ask questions by adhering to a specific order and then record the answers. This type of interview reduces the likelihood of researcher biases in the study (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). Open-ended interview questions allow the participant to provide as much information as possible and to share their experiences and their perspectives (Creswell, 2008). Information was recorded during the interview and it was then transcribed and used for data analysis later.

The second method of instrumentation utilized in this study was the use of surveys. This document was used as a form of inquiry and it included a list of carefully compiled questions. This survey instrument was used to allow the participant to answer specific questions that were asked and to provide pertinent data for the study. The survey instrument is used, “as a means of gathering information about the characteristics, actions, or opinions of a large group of people” (Pinsonneault & Kraemer, 1993, p. 77). Surveys were administered to a sample of the parent population and the middle school teachers in order to describe their attitudes, behaviors and opinions of the entire population. Surveys were structured in nature and participants were required to respond based on a specific set of questions that were provided.

A third form of instrumentation was the use of a focus group of parents. This focus group comprised of two parents at each Title I Urban Middle School. The researcher conducted discussions with the focus group at the Parent Center. This group focused on a specific topic and the discussion was carried out in a nonthreatening environment. The researcher was the facilitator and the participants were encouraged to speak openly and to give honest feedback. The focus group provided the researcher with useful information on the topic being discussed.

Observation was the fourth form of instrumentation that was used for this study. According to Marshall and Rossman (1989), “The systematic description of events, behaviors, and artifacts in the social setting that is chosen for the study” (p. 79). Observation is an effective method for the researcher to utilize in obtaining pertinent information about the behaviors and beliefs of the population that is being studied and to

do so in a particular setting. This research tool was also beneficial because it allowed the researcher to observe nonverbal expressions, to make conclusions about interactions between participants, to make observations based on patterns of communications and to develop an understanding of how the participants use their time and the activities that they are engaged in (Schmuck, 1997).

Document analyses represented the final method of instrumentation that was utilized by the researcher. All the documents that were analyzed were relevant to the topic of Title I guidelines and parental engagement activities. Document analysis is used as a research method to collect data and it provides the opportunity for triangulation. This allows the researcher to use multiple sources of data to collect vital evidence and to corroborate the findings (Creswell, 2008). Title I Parent Compact Agreement, Schools Title I Parent Document and Title I Newsletter were analyzed to provide information on parental engagement programs and parental engagement activities at the school.

Participants and Location of Research

A sample of the parents at Middle School A and Middle School B was selected to participate in this study. These parents were selected to complete a parent survey. The teachers at Middle School A and Middle School B were also participants in this study and they also completed the teacher surveys. The interviews were conducted at both Title I Urban Middle Schools in a school district located in metropolitan Atlanta. First, the researcher obtained permission from the school district in which both Title I Urban Middle Schools are located. A focus group of approximately four parents at one of the Title I Middle School was also selected to participate in a focus group discussion. This

focus group discussion took place at the Parent Centers. Secondly, permission was also granted by the principals of both Title I Urban Middle Schools where the participants were located. Therefore, the researcher was able to gain access to both locations in order to conduct the study. The Internal Review Board (IRB) at Clark Atlanta University also provided the necessary approval for the researcher to proceed with the study.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher conducted a document analysis of several Title I documents as they relate to Parental Engagement. The researcher first conducted an analysis of the Schools' Title I Parent Family Engagement Plan 2017-2018, "Supporting the Whole Child." The researcher carefully examined the documents and made pertinent observations of the components and specific guidelines as outlined by the Federal Government. The school district's Title I Parent Newsletter was the second document that was examined and it is located in the Parent Center of each Title I Middle School. This document explains the services and resources that the parent center offers to parents and families. The third document that was analyzed is the 2017-2018 School Family Compact for Student Achievement. The final documents that were analyzed were the schools' Climate Star Rating documents for each Middle School. This information is published annually by the Georgia Department of Education.

In the next step, the researcher conducted surveys of teachers and parents in order to collect useful data on parental engagement and its impact on students' performance. Survey questions were carefully compiled and administered to a sample of the parents of the students and to the teachers at both Title I Urban Middle Schools. Therefore, the

researcher utilized this method of collecting data and to obtain pertinent information for the qualitative study from the sampling of teachers and parents of students at the Title I Urban Middle Schools.

Open-ended interviews represented another instrument that was utilized by the researcher in the collection of data. The researcher conducted open-ended interviews with the principals at both Title I Urban Middle Schools, and both Parent Instructional Coordinators at Middle school A and Middle school B. Creswell (2013) provided a detailed system of data collection for conducting interviews in a study. According to Creswell, this carefully designed process includes; deciding on the research questions that will be answered by the interviewees, identify the interviewees, determine what type of interview is practical and will provide the most valuable information, use adequate recording procedures and design and use an interview protocol (Creswell, 2013).

The researcher utilized an interview protocol as is recommended by Creswell (2013). This provided a guide with a form of several pages in which the researcher was able to take notes and write down the comments made by the interviewee in a systematic manner. According to Creswell, the interview protocol also allows the researcher to organize ideas and thoughts that include starting and ending times, headings, and closing comments. The structured open ended interviews allowed the participants to answer a set of predetermined questions on the topic that is under study. It also provided the participants with the avenue to diverge from the specific questions and to divulge information that is deemed relevant to the study. The interviews were recorded using different devices including a digital recorder and the use of a smart phone recording

device. The researcher took notes and later the data were carefully transcribed and used in the study.

The open-ended interviews produced rich qualitative data because the researcher may obtain additional information that he or she may not have anticipated. Also, the interviewee might provide insights and ideas into the topic at hand that the researcher might have been unaware of. This method allowed for a very detailed and accurate description of participants' responses that can be validated for the study. The final data collection utilized by the researcher is a focus group of parents. A group of between four and five parents took part in a focused discussion with the researcher acting as the facilitator. This data collection method provided useful information on the topic of parental engagement.

The researcher ensured that the process of triangulation was well established during the qualitative study. According to Oliver-Hoyo (2006) of the *Journal of College Science Teaching*, "triangulation involves the careful reviewing of data collected through different methods in order to achieve a more accurate and valid estimate of qualitative results for a particular construct" (p. 42). Therefore, the researcher utilized multiple sources to collect data and this serves as a reliable and valid study. According to Creswell (2013), "Triangulation is a process that involves corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective" (p. 251). The researcher's deliberate use of multiple sources of data includes observation, document analysis, surveys and interviews and this represented the triangulation of the data. The researcher developed and implemented a combination of data sources to provide a more in-depth understanding

of the phenomenon that is under study and it also minimizes the inadequacies of a single source research (Yeasmin & Rahman, 2012). The multiple data sources that were applied and utilized in this qualitative study served as a means to corroborate results, to eliminate or decrease any biases and to provide reliability and validity to the findings.

Description of Data Analysis Methods

The document analyses represented the first step in conducting the qualitative study. Creswell (2013) described data analysis strategies in qualitative research as comprising of and organizing the data which includes transcripts, image data like photographs and then using a process of coding and condensing the data into themes. The data analysis spiral is the first strategy recommended by Creswell to be used in analyzing the data. Therefore, the researcher created a data analysis spiral and began data collection and data analysis at the bottom of the spiral based on Creswell's recommendation. Creswell discussed the "spiral of analysis," and provided different strategies of data analysis of qualitative research. His first step is to collect the data through multiple sources, and then he manages the data which includes writing, reading, and reflecting. Creswell follows data management by describing, classifying, interpreting, categorizing, comparing, and finally, representing and visualizing the data.

The researcher, therefore, implemented Creswell's (2013) data analysis spiral for this qualitative research. The data were collected from multiple sources and documented. Creswell explained that data collected in a qualitative study can be overwhelming and the researcher has to make sense out of all the data. Agar (1980) recommends that, "researchers read over the transcripts in their entirety several times and then immerse

themselves in the details to get a sense of the interview as a whole before breaking it into parts” (p. 103). The researcher read over all the transcripts in order to obtain an overview and a preliminary understanding.

The next step was to describe, classify, and interpret the data. The researcher coded the data and identified the themes that emerged in the data sources. The researcher then organized the data into themes. Creswell (2013) described themes in qualitative research as, “categories or broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a conclusion” (p. 186). The final stage was for the researcher to interpret the data. The data were interpreted and the researcher made conclusions based on the findings. The spiral analysis represents the data and this dynamic process demonstrates the consistency and how well the data are interconnected. The analysis of the data and the use of the spiral analysis is an approach that can help to improve the credibility of the findings.

Summary

The data collection process was carried out in a systemic and methodological manner. The design that was used with a triangulation of data sources contributed to the corroboration and validity of the study. Creswell’s (2013) spiral analysis provided a systematic approach to data analysis and the various stages and activities led to the interpretation and findings. The researcher utilized a triangulation method to study the impact of how school leadership, school culture and teachers’ perceptions influence parental engagement. Document analyses of Title I documents, surveys, interviews and focus groups represented triangulation in the qualitative study. The triangulation of data

provided a more comprehensive list of data, it provided more insight into the topic under study and multiple sources helped to verify and validate the findings of the study. This research design. Therefore, produced findings and the researcher was able to make conclusions about parental engagement that have implications for educational leaders.

CHAPTER V
ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Introduction

Parental engagement and relationships between schools and families have been identified as methods to improve students' academic achievement. However, most studies have focused on the role of parental engagement in elementary schools and have not provided adequate explanations of adolescent development and the challenges of parental engagement in middle schools (Hill & Taylor, 2004; Hill, Tyson, & Bromell, 2009). The purpose of this study, therefore, was to identify how the factors of school leadership, school culture and teachers' perceptions influence parental engagement in two Title I Urban Middle Schools. The process used to analyze the data collected from the study included the four different data sources that were used to ensure the triangulation of the data. The first data source that was utilized included teachers' surveys. Teachers at each of the Title I Urban Middle schools completed surveys that consisted of a total of 16 questions. Parents at both middle schools were also requested to complete surveys that have a total of 18 questions. The second source of data was an open ended interview and this was conducted with each of the middle school principals. An interview was also conducted with each of the Parent Liaison at each Title I Middle School. A focus group discussion of parents constituted a third form of data source. The final data source included document analysis of Parent School Compact and Title I documents.

Once approval was granted by the school district's central office, a formal request was then made to gain access to each of the middle school. The researcher submitted written requests to the principal of each middle school in order to begin the data collection process. This was followed by several phone calls and more emails and actual visits to the school. After meeting with each principal, access was finally granted and the researcher began the task of meeting with the various participants in order to begin the collection of data. Data were collected over a 3-week period from November 20, 2017 to December 14, 2017.

Data Analysis of Teacher Surveys

A total of 78 teacher surveys were sent to participants at Middle school A and Middle School B. Of that total number, 70 surveys were completed and returned to the researcher. The demographic data of the teachers who participated in the study was analyzed. This group of participants was from diverse racial backgrounds and was classified with from 0-5 years of teaching experience to some having over 16 years of teaching experience. The majority of teachers identified themselves as being highly qualified. A highly qualified teacher is regarded as one that has obtained a bachelor's degree, is certified by the State Licensing Authority and is knowledgeable in the subject area being taught. A teacher who is not highly qualified is one that does not meet all three criteria. He or she may have attained a bachelor's degree but is not certified by the State Department of Education in the subject area or grade level being taught.

Table 1 represents the demographic data of the teachers who participated in the study.

Table 1

Demographics of Teachers

Demographic	Number
Race	
Black	46
White	13
Hispanic	4
Years of Experience	
0 – 5	28
6 – 10	8
11 – 15	9
over 16	21
Highly Qualified	
Yes	56
No	14
Gender	
Male	14
Female	56

Some teachers did not identify their race on the survey; Out of a total of 70 teachers, 7 of them did not answer the question or give information on their race.

There were 16 questions on the teacher survey instrument and all 70 teachers were asked to respond to these questions. Each survey question had three options that the teacher could respond to and these were always, sometimes and never. The researcher used a Likert Scale to provide scores for the responses. A response of never was scored as one point, a response of sometimes was scored as two points and a response of always was scored as three points. The teachers' responses were grouped based on the research

questions and the variables. See Table 2 with teachers' responses to survey questions and total points for each question.

Table 2

Teachers' Survey Responses

Research Question	Always	Percentage of Total		Percentage of Total		Total Possible
		Possible	Sometimes	Possible	Possible	
1	147	70	36	17	210	
2	120	47	54	26	210	
2	150	71	38	18	210	
4	156	74	32	15	210	
5	192	92	12	6	210	
6	138	66	46	22	210	
7	189	90	12	6	210	
8	114	54	27	13	210	
10	150	71	36	17	210	

Data Analysis of Parents' Surveys

The researcher sent out a total of 45 surveys to parents at both Urban Title I Middle Schools. Of that total, only 14 surveys were completed and returned by parents. There were a total of 18 questions on each survey and parents were required to respond by saying always, sometimes, or never. Each "always" response received a score of 3 points, a "sometimes" response received a score of 2 points, and a "never" response received 1 point.

Parents completed a survey protocol form and were also required to provide demographic information on the survey. Table 3 provides demographic information of parents and Table 4 shows parents' survey responses.

Table 3

Demographics of Parents

Demographic	Number
Parents: Level of Education	
GED	8
Associate	4
Bachelors	5
Graduate	1
Parents: Socioeconomic Level	
Children receive Free/Reduced Lunch	
Yes	10
No	4
Parents: Race	
Black	8
Hispanic	4
White	1
Asian	0
Native	0
Primary Home Language	
English	10
Spanish	4

Table 4

Parents' Survey Responses

Research Question	Always	Percentage of Total		Percentage of Total		Total
		Possible	Sometimes	Possible	Possible	
1	9	21	20	71	42	
2	15	36	16	57	42	
2	27	64	10	36	42	
4	33	79	6	21	42	
6	30	71	8	29	42	
7	27	64	10	36	42	
8	21	50	14	50	42	
10	27	64	10	36	42	
11	18	43	12	43	42	
12	24	57	12	43	42	

Analysis of Title I Documents

Several documents were analyzed to examine the school's district strategic goals and their focus on parental engagement programs that have been implemented. The first document that was examined is the Schools' Title I Parent Family Engagement Plan 2017-2018, "Supporting the Whole Child." This document is produced by the school's district Title I department and is located in the Parent Center at both Middle School A and Middle School B. The Title I document provides a clear and detailed definition of family engagement. It also offers information on how parental engagement plays an integral role in their children's education and how schools regard parents and families as equal partners in education. Secondly, the document provides an overview of the Title I Federal Program whose goal is to promote and strengthen students' academic

achievement. It also explains how the federal program offers funding to local school districts to ensure that children in Title I schools meet high academic standards. This document states that parents, families and children are required to give feedback and input on the school's district family engagement plan. Numerous parental engagement activities were listed with the goal of encouraging parents to become involved.

Building school and parent capacity is one of the stated goals of the parent and family engagement plan. There are several programs and initiatives that the Title I department is promoting to encourage the effective involvement and support of parents and families forming partnerships with their school and community. This family and engagement Title I document offers an overview of the process of how parents and families can evaluate the program. It explains that families are required to be actively involved in the evaluation of the program and it provides a list of opportunities that parents, families and the community have at their disposal not only to be engaged but to offer constructive feedback.

The school district's Title I Parent Newsletter is the second document that was examined and it is located in the Parent Center of each Title I Middle School. The concept of "the whole child" is emphasized on the first page of the document. This concept was also described in the previous document, the Schools' Title I Parent Family Engagement Plan 2017-2018. The Title I department provides a clear explanation of their belief and commitment to the whole child concept and their emphasis on providing resources to increase student achievement. They also describe how their resources will be used to develop parental engagement programs and to improve students' learning

environment. This document contains a list of the Title I Parent Resource Centers and the information parents can use to become involved. It also highlights the roles that Parent Liaisons play in helping to foster the parent and family engagement plan and to promote parental engagement activities at their respective schools.

The third document that was analyzed is the 2017-2018 School Family Compact for Student Achievement. This document was located in the Parent Center at Middle School A. With regards to student achievement, there are four district goals listed in this document. These are student achievement, people and culture, community and collaboration, and fiscal responsibility. Several specific school goals are contained in this document. These include an increase in student scores by meeting or exceeding by 10% the Georgia Milestone Assessments in reading and math. Other focus areas were described in this document and these include reading, math, and school communication with families. This document also highlights numerous parental engagement activities as well as the various ways schools communicate with families. A description of how the school family compact is developed is included as well as how much input parents are given in this process. There are three sections that really stand out in this document and these were not present in the other documents that were analyzed. The first section is on school and teacher responsibilities and states that teachers will provide resources in reading and math for children and parents. The second category is parent responsibility which outlines the parents' role in setting aside time to help their children with homework. The researcher found the third and final section to be quite interesting because it provides an outline of the students' responsibilities. It says that students will

utilize reading materials and math resources that are provided in workshops and the parent resource center.

The final documents that were analyzed were the schools' Climate Star Rating documents. This information is published annually by the Georgia Department of Education. This organization collects data from all public schools in the state and uses the data to compile this rating and this is made public for all schools and stakeholders. The School Climate Star Rating is calculated using data from the Georgia Student Health Survey 2.0, Georgia School Personnel Survey, Georgia Parent Survey, student discipline data and attendance records for students, teachers, staff and administrators (Georgia Department of Education, 2007). The School Climate Star Rating provides school-level data on the following components: Teacher and parents' surveys, school safety, students' attendance and students' behavior. For Middle School A, they obtained a school climate star rating of one star for school year 2017. This represents a very low rating in terms of school safety, students' attendance, students' behavior and their consequences for disciplinary issues and teacher and parents' perceptions of the school. Middle School A attained a higher school climate star rating for the two previous years. In school year 2016 and school year 2015, Middle School A achieved three stars for each one of those years. However in school year 2017, there was a dramatic decline and the school managed to receive only one star for their climate star rating. Middle School B obtained a school climate star rating of five stars in school year 2017. They received the maximum number of stars allowed which is five. In the previous years, 2015 and 2016, Middle School B received a four star rating from the Georgia Department of Education for each

of those years. Therefore, Middle School B experienced an increase from four stars in 2016 to five stars in 2017.

In order to have a better understanding of the respective school's climate star rating it is imperative to study the responses to the various student, teacher and parent surveys that were conducted by the Georgia Department of Education. In response to the climate perception survey in 2016, 81% of the parents at Middle School B completed the survey. However at Middle School A in 2016 there was no participation from parents and in fact they have a 0% participation. This is in stark contrast to Middle School B and it does provide some context for understanding the climate star rating of three stars for Middle School A and four stars for Middle School B. In its most recent year, in 2017 Middle School A obtained a climate star rating of one star. It is quite interesting and informative to analyze the different surveys that students, teachers and parents completed that contributed to the low climate star rating. In 2017, Middle School A had a fairly high percentage of 84.7% for attendance rating. However, the school's rating on discipline as well as their rating on climate perception was very low. Middle School A received a 48.5% rating on discipline and they had 411 students who received in school suspensions and 570 students who received out of school suspensions. On the other hand, Middle School B obtained a climate star rating of five stars and they had an 86% rate for discipline. Also this middle school recorded 124 in school suspensions and 85 out of school suspensions and these numbers are dramatically lower than Middle School A. Finally, the climate star perception at Middle School A was 59.2% while it was 74.9% at Middle School B. There were a much larger number of parents that completed this survey

at Middle School B and in fact 82% of the parents responded to the survey while at Middle School A only 60% of the parents completed the survey in 2017.

Summary of Document Analysis

From the document analyses there were several themes that emerged. These themes are student academic outcomes, parental engagement activities, schools' communication with parents and families, learning resources, collaborating with stakeholders, teacher responsibilities, parent responsibilities, student responsibilities, fiscal responsibility and the use of parent resource centers. From the documents analyses, there are several pertinent points that stood out in the Title I documents and they do support the themes that emerged. The number one priority that was expressed is increased student achievement. Secondly, the Title I department explained how they have provided resources and will continue to do so with the expressed goal of improving students' academic achievement. Another focus area in all the documents is how the Title I department is encouraging and promoting parental engagement in order to get parents to be involved in helping with their children's education.

The fourth priority that was expressed in the documents is an emphasis of the roles played by different stakeholders and how they also contribute to the "whole child concept." Therefore, the main idea from all four documents is that increased student achievement is one of the school district's strategic goals and they plan to accomplish this by collaborating and communicating with families and the community. The school district and Title I also hope to develop and sustain effective partnerships with parents and families. Finally, they believe that the whole child concept will only be realized by

the Title I department in providing funding and allocating resources to the schools. Finally, their belief is that children, parents and teachers all have responsibilities that they must shoulder and they must work together in order to achieve improved student outcomes.

Interview Analysis

Several interviews were conducted by the researcher based on the availability of the participants. The first interview was conducted with the Parent Liaison at Middle School A. This interview took place in the Parent Resource Center at a time that was conducive to the participant. The second interview was conducted with the principal of Middle School A in a conference room at the school. Again, this was done at a time that was suitable to the principal. The researcher conducted the third interview with both Parent Liaisons at Middle School B. Middle School B has two Parent Liaisons, one is the Title I Parent Liaison and a second one which is Hispanic and whose role is to serve the large percentage of Hispanic students at the school. This interview took place in the office of the Parent Liaison and at a time that was chosen by both Parent Liaisons. The fourth interview was conducted with the principal of Middle school B in the principal's office and it was done at a time that was agreed upon and was conducive to the principal. Before the interviews took place, the researcher reviewed the statement of consent with all participants and they were asked to complete and sign the forms. The researcher also asked each participant to orally give their permission to voluntarily participate in the interview portion of the study.

Two recording devices were used by the researcher. The first one was a digital recording device and the second one was a voice recorder application on the smart phone. The researcher was very diligent in taking copious notes during the interview. The duration of each interview varied in terms of how long it lasted. The interview with the Parent Liaison at Middle School A lasted for 45 minutes while the interview with the principal at the same school lasted 17 minutes. This interview with the principal at Middle School A lasted a much shorter time than the interview with the other principal. It was a little challenging to schedule this appointment with the principal and the day of the interview he seemed to be rushing through the questions. It was not clear to the researcher what the exact reason was and whether or not he may have had other prior engagements planned. At Middle school B, the interview with both Parent Liaisons took 55 minutes and the duration of the interview with the principal at Middle School B was 50 minutes. All the recording of the interviews was submitted to a company that provided transcription services and the transcriptions were returned within a five business day window.

Focus Group Discussion Analysis

The researcher made several attempts to obtain a group of parents to conduct a focus group discussion. This proved very to be very challenging and the researcher had to postpone meeting times on at least two occasions because of a lack of commitment from parents. Four parents were invited to meet and discuss parental engagement but only two parents (50%) actually attended and participated in the discussion. The meeting took place in the Parent Center Technology Room at Middle School B after school was

dismissed. This focus group discussion lasted 32 minutes. Both parents were excited to take part in the discussion. The researcher ensured that both parents signed off on the protocol forms and they also orally stated that they are voluntarily participating in this study. The researcher utilized two forms of recording for this discussion. A digital recording device was used as well as an application on a smart phone. The recording was later submitted to an online transcription services company and they transcribed the audio and returned it to the researcher within a three business day window. From the analysis of this focus group discussion, there were many themes that were revealed. These include principal's leadership, parent workshops, schools' communication, school diversity, school culture, language barrier, students' accountability, students' academic performance, students' attendance and school resources.

Data Analysis of Research Questions

The researcher coded all the data sources and identified 15 themes from all data sources. These are student academic outcomes, collaborative or shared leadership, parental engagement activities, teachers' perceptions of parental engagement, learning resources, parents' perceptions of parental engagement, schools' communication, parent center workshops, school climate, Title I resources, students' behavior, school culture, community resources, students' attendance and school diversity. From the data analysis, the researcher will examine each research question and determine if any significant relationship exists.

RQ1: Is there a relationship between principal's leadership style and parental engagement?

Research question number 1 is aligned with principal's leadership style and the impact on parental engagement. This theme of principal's leadership style was present in both principals' interviews, the interviews with the Parent Liaisons, the teacher surveys, parent surveys and the focus group discussion. The majority of the teachers (70%) responded positively by saying that the principal recognizes the importance of parental engagement activities and that he/she develops programs to encourage parental engagement. However not many parents responded as positively and, in fact, only 21% of parents believe that the principals always support parental engagement. The theme of principals' leadership style was evident in all the interviews and was explained by both principals as a collaborative or shared leadership when it comes to parental engagement. The principal at Middle school A stated the following:

Well, my leadership style is a collaborative one as no one person can serve all the needs of the children in my school. Well, that style aligns perfectly with supporting the community. You serve as not only a leader in the community but you also support the development and the creation of opportunities for the children. And again it's one of those styles that allows the parents to be totally collaborative with you as you try to grow our school, (Principal's Interview, Middle School A, November, 29, 2017)

When the principal, at Middle School B was asked about how his leadership style impacted parental engagement he stated the following:

And so I think the parents here or maybe a particular sector of the parents here you know, feel very empowered to be a part of you know the school to be

engaged to give their opinion, to email me, or call me or don't have an issue coming up to me and starting a conversation, right. (Principal's Interview, Middle School B, December 1, 2017)

Both parent liaisons spoke clearly about the principal's leadership style and their impact on parental engagement and they used words like "approachable, supportive, head of the household and on top of it." Parent Liaison at Middle School B stated that,

The leadership style of our principal is that he's a wonderful supporter of the whole staff and ensures that every student in our community is met with their needs. Our principal encourages and is also a strong believer in family engagement. (Parent Liaison Interview, Middle School B, December 1, 2017)

The responses from the participants in this study indicate that a relationship exists between the principal's leadership style and parental engagement.

RQ2: How do teachers' perceptions influence parental engagement?

Teachers' perceptions of parental engagement are one of the fifteen themes that emerged from the data sources. The teachers responded overwhelmingly that they recognize the importance of parental engagement and that they encourage parental engagement. However, one teacher responded to the survey question: I believe teachers will change their schedule to accommodate parental engagement; the teacher responded by saying "sometimes" and then wrote in the margin; "I would but most teachers wouldn't." The teachers' responses can be compared to the responses that were given by parents. While 57% of the teachers responded positively to supporting parental engagement, only 36% of parents responded as positively to the teachers supporting

them. A large majority of the parents 64% believed that only sometimes will the teachers change their schedules or keep them informed of their children's progress. Research Question number 2 received mixed responses from the two principals' interviews as well as the interviews of the parent liaisons. The principal at Middle School A stated the following in response to the question: "How would you describe the teachers' perceptions of parental engagement and do the teachers believe they do have an impact on parental engagement?" The principal said,

I think it's split. Some really feel that they do, particularly those teachers who are a product of the community as they have a personal connection with these children's success. However, there are others who feel because of their economic disability or economic positions that because of these parents' situations and their inability to be as involved as say parents that come from a middle class background that is not really important to invest into them because of their lack of commitment. (Principal's Interview, Middle School A, November 29, 2017)

The principal at Middle School B stated the following:

That's a good question. You know I think most teachers would say because of the number of kids that fall into groups that traditionally fail in school that you know that there is for the kids where it's most important that there is a lack of parental engagement for those kids who they are trying to support and they really need support from home. The teachers probably don't feel like they get it you know like it's just them trying to push the kids forward and all the partners aren't equally involved. (Principal's Interview, Middle School B, December 1, 2017)

One of the parents in the focus group discussion described the teachers as being supportive, and that some of the teachers call for meetings to discuss her child's progress, what they need to work on and how teachers also reach out and communicate with her. On the other hand, the parent liaison at Middle School A described the teachers' attitude toward parental engagement as being mixed and not totally supportive. She stated the following:

I feel like teachers are at the other end of the spectrum. You do have the principal as the head of the household so he does understand the importance but as far as teachers I don't think they understand the importance. And many of them could just be so tied up into their own curriculum and their own academics and what they need to do for the students. They kind of forget that the parents, you know are part of their academic success. (Parent Liaison Interview, Middle School A, November 29, 2017)

The parent Liaison at Middle School B expressed a similar sentiment and said sometimes some teachers are not flexible in meeting with parents and are not very understanding of parents' schedules, especially those who have to work and those who do not have flexible work schedules. The participants in this study express the belief that the teachers' perceptions do have an influence on parental engagement.

RQ3: Is there a relationship between school climate and parental engagement?

From the teachers' surveys, it was revealed that the school has a warm and inviting climate and that the school values and welcomes all cultures. In fact, 71% of teachers believed that their school is welcoming to parents and children from different

cultures. However, this is in contrast to the parents' response. Only 64% of the parents believe that their school recognizes and respects their ethnicities and culture and they claim that their school culture does have an impact on whether or not they will become involved. This theme was also quite evident from the interviews conducted with both principals as well as the Parent Liaisons. The principal at Middle School B gave an interesting response to the question concerning school climate and parental engagement. He stated the following:

Our school climate, I don't necessarily believe it subtracts from parent involvement but I do believe that we can continue to refine our beliefs such that we can engage more parents. (Principal Interview, Middle School A, November 29, 2017)

This principal continued by explaining that there is room for improvement with regards to school climate. It is quite interesting that the parent liaison at this same school (Middle School A) expressed similar views that are aligned with the principal. When she was asked about school climate and parental engagement, she said,

The school climate, I feel, I honestly feel it could be better as far as welcoming students, welcoming parents. Parents for the most part we want them to feel welcome here. We want them to come and use the Parent Resource Center but we do have a short stock when it comes to that end of the spectrum. (Parent Liaison Interview, Middle School A, November 29, 2017)

However, on the other hand the principal at Middle School B believed that his school has a very positive school climate that promotes parental engagement. He stated that,

It's extremely positive, I mean that's you know what we hear almost every single time. When we have visitors in our building that's one of the first things they'll say you know that they can feel the support and the positivity and the family atmosphere and how everyone is kind of together and you know moving in the same direction and we all know we have to do that. (Principal's Interview, Middle School B, December 1, 2017)

From all the responses given to this research question, it can be concluded or it appears that there is a substantial relationship between school climate and parental engagement.

RQ4: Is there a relationship between the schools' use of technology in communicating with parents and the level of parental engagement?

The parents' surveys revealed that parents' responded overwhelmingly that they receive communication from the school in different formats using technology. The majority of parents, 79% say that the school communicates with them through emails, text messages, telephone calls, school and teacher websites and newsletters. The percentage of parents that responded positively to schools' communication is very similar to the percentage of teachers that responded as positively. As a matter of fact, 74% of teachers agree that the school uses various forms of technology to communicate with parents and the teachers believe that it has an impact on parental engagement. The Parent Liaisons at both middle schools described several methods of communicating with parents including school messenger, school website and social media including Facebook and Twitter. Schools' communication with families was one of the prominent themes that

were highlighted in the documents analyses. These documents explained the different methods that are available for parents to communicate with schools and how to become involved in their children's education. From the documents analysis, parents are also encouraged to provide feedback on parental engagement activities and to offer input in developing the parent compact. From the findings obtained from principals' interviews, teacher and parent surveys. Interviews with parent liaisons and the document analysis, there appear to be a significant relationship between the school's use of communication and the level of parental engagement. Most or all of the participants described their communication methods with families using technology and one principal expressed the belief that this communication does have an effect on the level of parental engagement.

He stated the following:

Again, I mean if you are communicating lots and lots of different ways, I think that's going to encourage them to get or be involved. If there's a lack of communication or they seem that they can't get information then that's going to make things very negative right, maybe turn them off. You know, they may engage with you in a not so nice way to let you know how misinformed they are but that hurts, you know. When it comes down to having a critical conversation or when you need them they are not going to be there for you because they don't trust you because of your miscommunication. (Principal Interview, Middle School B, December 1, 2017)

RQ5: Is there a relationship between parents' perceptions of parental engagement and their actual level of engagement?

This research question was addressed during the principals' interviews and the parent liaisons' interviews. The parents also spoke about parents' perceptions of parental engagement during the focus group discussion. Most participants agree that the parents' experiences during their time at school do influence their level of parental engagement. Participants also explain that if parents have one negative experience at their child's school, then they may not return or even try to become involved. The principal at Middle School A stated that,

However, what I do believe is that we have a body of parents who were once students who had a bad experience in schools and because of that previous experience they are not as connected as they should be. (Principal's Interview at Middle School A, November 29, 2017)

The parent liaison at that same middle school, Middle School A explained how the appearance and actions of the school's leadership as well as the teachers can have a negative effect on parents. She claimed that some parents are not comfortable when interacting with teachers and in fact may be intimidated by the administrators. The principal at Middle School B described how parents who believe they are not getting the necessary information from their child's school how this may affect their level of engagement. He stated the following:

But you know. If they can't, if they try to get engaged and can't get engage, people put them off, they keep rescheduling meetings whatever it is or we never meet with them or whatever then they are just going to tune out rather than what it should be like. (Principal Interview, Middle School B, November 29, 2017)

From the focus group discussion, the parents agree that the school's actions in terms of respecting their input and decision making and of teachers reaching out to them, that this will influence their perceptions and will help to determine how much they want to become involved. The respondents in this study do make the claim the parents' perceptions have an effect on their level of engagement.

RQ6: Is there a relationship between school culture and parental engagement?

Both principals spoke about the importance of school culture in their interviews and how important it is to fostering parental engagement. One of the principals stated the following:

Our culture is one of again making sure that kids understand that we value them.

There is nothing wrong with not knowing because our whole purpose of being here is to serve them and in closing the learning gaps. (Principal Interview, Middle School A, November 29, 2017)

The other principal at Middle School B spoke about the importance of his school's culture and he emphasized that they have a loving, positive and supportive environment for all parents and students. He also mentioned that teachers have to want to work at the school and be supportive of the diverse student population. The parent liaison at Middle School A explained that they have a very "cultural based school" and that they love all cultures. She described how the school ensures that they communicate with all their parents and she expounds on the fact that they have a high percentage of Hispanic students. She, therefore, expressed the view that the school accommodates all students and their families and that every communication that is sent out is translated into Spanish

to cater to the Hispanic families. In the focus group discussion, one of the parents spoke about how the school has to support the parents so that they can in turn support their children. From the parents' surveys, 71% of the parents respond positively to questions relating to school culture and parental engagement. The parents say that if the school respects and values their input and encourages them to communicate their concerns and support, then they are more inclined to become involved. From the teachers' perspective and their responses on the surveys, 66% say that their school recognizes the significance of building partnerships with families. Therefore, the conclusion can be made that it appears that there is a relationship between school culture and parental engagement. School culture is also one of the dominant themes that emerged during this study.

RQ7: What is the relationship between students' attendance and parental engagement?

The theme of students' attendance was evident in all four interviews, the focus group discussion as well as parent and teacher surveys. From the teachers' surveys, the majority of them or 90% responded that parental engagement has a positive impact on students' attendance. However, there was a much smaller response from the parents and in fact only 64% responded positively and believe that parental engagement has a positive influence on students' attendance. Both parents in the focus group discussion spoke about the school's methods of communicating to parents when children are either absent, cutting class and skipping and they explain how that helps them to be involved and to monitor their children's attendance. The principal at Middle School B initially said that he was not sure if they are correlated when he was asked if parental engagement

influences student attendance. However, he had an interesting explanation and he went on further to say that if education is valued in the home and the kid understands that it's valued then they will value coming to school. He also remarked,

And I think that may impact more based on just what the value of education in the home environment versus you know the level of involvement. (Principal Interview, Middle School B, December 1, 2017)

The conclusion is that there appears to be a relationship between parental engagement and students' attendance. While one principal provided clarification that he believes students' attendance is dependent on whether or not education is valued in the home, the conclusion from the other participants is that it seems like parental engagement has a positive effect on students' attendance.

RQ8: What is the relationship between students' discipline and parental engagement?

It appears from the responses gathered in this study that there is a relationship between parental engagement and students' discipline. From the interviews of both principals 'the interviews of the parent liaisons and the teacher and parent surveys, they responded by saying that parental engagement has a somewhat positive impact on students' behavior. From the parents' surveys only 50% of parents responded as positively and believe that parental engagement has a positive impact on students' behavior. The teachers' response was very similar to the parents and only 54% believe that parental engagement has a positive influence. The teachers follow up response might provide some understanding to their response. The teachers claim that they did not

believe that the schools provide adequate information and resources to assist parents when their children experience disciplinary issues. This might help to provide some context for their original response. During one of the interviews, the principal stated,

Yes definitely. You know the parents are powerful models; you have to walk the walk and talk the talk. You know that impacts their children. The home environment is extremely important to know how the kid behaves in school and how the kid values their education and how they do in class. I think that's key.

(Principal Interview, Middle School B, December 1, 2017)

Therefore, it appears that there is a substantial relationship between parental engagement and students' behavior from the responses of the participants. However, it does not appear to be a significant relationship.

RQ9: What is the level of engagement parents have in Title I funded schools?

According to the responses from interviews given by both principals and the parent liaisons at each middle school, parents have a high level of parental engagement at Title I middle schools. First and foremost, both principals explain that Federal Title I Guidelines require schools to develop and implement parental engagement programs and those parents play a vital role in creating these programs. One of the parent liaisons describes the process of having a parent compact jointly made between the school and the parents. She also stated that,

We also have to have a parent family engagement plan established where our parents join us in making decisions that come from feedback and input. (Parent Liaison Interview, Middle School B, December 1, 2017)

The principal at Middle School B also spoke highly about the involvement of parents in the PTA, the Local School Governance and the various workshops that are offered by the school and Title I through the Parent Center. From the document analysis, it was learned that Title I provides various types of funding to be utilized by schools in creating parental engagement programs. From the focus group discussion, the parents describe some of the programs that are available to parents through Title I funding and this includes a technology center that is available for parents' use and the Rosetta Stone Language program that assist parents and students in learning English. The parent liaisons also describe learning resources, materials and books that are available to parents to be used with their children.

RQ10: Is there a relationship between students' academic achievement and parental engagement?

This research question was addressed by both principals, the parent liaisons at each of the middle schools, the parents who participated in the focus group discussion, the responses from parents' surveys and the responses from teachers' surveys. All the participants in this study responded overwhelmingly that parental engagement has a positive effect on students' academic performance. The principal at Middle school B responded and said he believed that parents who are engaged have a strong influence on their children's performance in school. He stated the following:

I mean, yes, I mean you know obviously I think there's a strong correlation between a parent's level of involvement with their kid in their education and that

kid's success in school. (Principal Interview, Middle School B, December 1, 2017).

From the Teachers surveys out of a total of seventy teachers who participated in the survey, 50 teachers or (71%) responded positively that when students receive parental support in their learning they demonstrate increased interest and performance in their academic studies. From the parents' survey 64% responded that when they are involved in helping their children with homework they perform better in school. Parents, therefore, claim that parental involvement in their children's education allows them to help with assignments and to monitor their studies. The researcher sought more information on parental engagement and students' academic outcomes by posing a follow up question to both principals. They were asked to describe the academic achievement of students whose parents are engaged in their education compared to other students' performance whose parents are less engaged in their education. The principal at Middle School A explained that from his observations and experiences children of parents who are more involved tend to perform better in school than those whose parents are less involved. The principal at Middle school B agreed that children with involved parents will do better in school compared to less involved parents. However, he also believed that sometimes there are some students who will still perform well and can be the exception to the rule even when their parents are not as involved. He stated the following:

Yes, I mean certainly, I mean those kids that have involved parents again there are outliers, but for the most part those kids do really well. Whereas, well or as well

as they can do or whatever and then when you have parents that aren't as engaged then you get kids that don't do as well.”

He continued by saying,

And I think that's you know can be a fact but not necessarily all the time because certainly there are kids that aren't like that who rise above that stereotype right?

Principal Interview, Middle School B, December 1, 2017)

Students' academic outcome is one of the emergent themes in the documents analysis. It was highlighted in all the Title I documents and it was emphasized as the number one priority of schools to promote parental engagement in order to improve student achievement. From the responses acquired from the participants in this study the conclusion is that it appears that parental engagement has a positive impact on students' academic performance.

RQ11: Is there a relationship between parents' use of the parent center and parental engagement?

Both principals responded to this research question in their interview. The parent liaisons at each middle school replied to this question and one parent liaison provided an interesting answer. From the parents' surveys, only 43% responded as positively that the parent center has educational and technological resources to help them monitor their children's progress. However, the principal at Middle School B spoke about the numerous technological resources that are provided by the school, Title I, and the parent center that are available for teachers, students and parents to use. He stated the following:

We are a tech rich school. You know we're one to every single student in our school has their own device which for us through a grant was provided by Verizon. (Principal Interview, Middle School B, December 1, 2017)

He continued by explaining that they provide technological resources through their parent center and parents are always welcome to use the resources. The principal at Middle School B described the "Rosetta Stone" resource which is provided by the school and is utilized by the Hispanic parents who are learning to speak English. He stated the following:

The principal at Middle School A also supported the belief that the resources at the parent center support parents in their involvement in their children's education. He said the following:

Yeah, many of the parents who've been successful in getting to the school, they use the parent center, the parent Title I center that we've set up for them. They really have found some helpful resources in understanding where their child is at from a developmental standpoint, that part has really been missed. (Principal Interview, Middle School A, November 29, 2017)

Meanwhile, the parent liaison at Middle School A explained that their parent center does not have adequate resources to meet the needs of the parents. She also described the challenges that parents have in terms of having access to transportation in order to visit the school. The parent center at Middle School B is fully equipped with technology and other resources to accommodate parents' needs. According to responses from the participants, that parent center is frequently used by parents. However, on the other hand,

the parent center at Middle School A is not fully equipped and it lacks technological resources. Hence, that center is seldom used by parents. This would indicate that there is a relationship between the parents' use of the parent center and parental engagement.

RQ12: What is the relationship between the school's funding of the parent center and parental engagement?

Most of the respondents in this study believe that the funding of the parent center does have an effect on parental engagement. The parent Liaisons describe the numerous services that the resource centers provide to promote parental engagement activities. However, they also lament the fact that Title I will not cover some of the services that would be beneficial to parents. The principal at Middle school B said that the parent liaisons through the parent center perform a great job of hosting workshops, like the Georgia Milestone and providing resources for the students, the teachers and parents. He described the purchase and use of an academic and tutoring support service that they have purchased through Title I funds. He stated the following:

Yeah, I mean I think yes. You know you've certainly seen growth there and improvement there and things getting better you know is where we want to be.

(Principal Interview, Middle School B, December 1, 2017)

The parent liaison at Middle School A expounded on the fact that Title I and the parent resource centers provide academic resources for its parents. However she lamented the fact that Title I does not cover or provide other services like offering food to parents and families when they attend workshops. She stated the following:

The only thing that, since I've been here the funding has been able to be spent on is academic things. I think that's a good thing but at the same time I don't understand why that kind of stuff isn't just provided. We used to be able to, Title I used to be able to spend money on food. They took out that completely. So this year for all the events we have been coming out of pocket for our parents, out of our own pockets. (Parent Liaison Interview, Middle School A, November 29, 2017)

The parent center liaison at Middle School B described how supportive their local community is to the school and its parental engagement programs. They have received numerous resources and support in the form of books, clothing, donations to the clinic, food and other contributions to Hispanic Heritage Month, Movie Night activities and mentoring services by a local church. The principal at Middle School B articulated the fact that their local community partners do support their programs to improve parental engagement. From the parents' surveys, (57%) say that they always receive support from the staff at the parent center and that they help them in understanding the education system and their children's grades. From the survey, the remaining 6 parents (43%) agree that sometimes the parent liaisons support them in explaining and monitoring their children's grades and progress.

In the focus group discussion, one of the parents described how the parents utilize the resources in the parent center and how its utilization has an impact on parental engagement. She stated the following:

And I definitely can say that they do it right over there and just about every last one of those computers are used. So I mean they get on the average of maybe 15, 20 parents and they're here. And those same parents are the ones who show up for the Parent University and for the cultural awareness. So I think it's a good resource and really like it encourages the parents. (Parent Focus Group Discussion, December 14, 2017)

Finally, one parent liaison clarified her role and stated that,

My role is to love 'them' parents and encourage them to be engaged to participate and know the value of engagement and how it can help their child to be successful in academics. Just seeing them parents and working here and parents knowing, you know what they're doing it makes a big difference in someone's in the parent's life and students and staff. (Parent Liaison Interview, Middle school B, December 1, 2017)

The other parent Liaison at the same school described her role and stated that,

Well, my role will be to educate the parents in how the school system works. As I said there are a lot of differences and it's just to manage and it's an education process for the parents. Also I am the link between the school and the Latino community and it's trying to empower them without overwhelming them. (Parent Liaison Interview at Middle school B, December 1, 2017)

Based on the responses from the participants in this study, it appears that the funding of the parent centers does have an effect on parental engagement.

Summary

The researcher collected all the data for this study and it was analyzed with the utmost fidelity. All the participants volunteered to participate in this study and they were informed that all identifying information would be confidential. The researcher informed the participants that they had the right to change their mind and to discontinue their participation in the study at any time. All data sources were carefully coded to highlight the different themes and to provide meaning to the findings of the study. The themes that were revealed in the data are vital to understanding the study and to help in answering the research questions. The interviews with both Parent Liaisons and principals at Middle School A and Middle School B yielded a plethora of information and provided deep insights into the study. Fifteen themes emerged from all the data sources in this study. These themes are student achievement, collaborative or shared leadership, parental engagement, teachers' perceptions of parental engagement, learning resources, parents' perceptions of parental engagement, schools' communication, parent center workshops, school climate, Title I resources, students' behavior, school culture, community resources, students' attendance and school diversity.

CHAPTER VI
FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter examines and utilizes the data in order to make pertinent conclusions about the findings of the study. The chapter specifically looks at the data in much more detail and the researcher frames the data with regards to the research questions. Secondly, the researcher uses the data to make a determination as to the relationships that exist between the independent and dependent variables. This chapter uses the emergent themes to further discuss the findings and to answer the research question of how factors of school leadership, school culture and teachers' perceptions influence parental engagement. This chapter also describes the implications for educational leaders and makes recommendations for further research on parental engagement.

Findings

The researcher coded all the data sources and identified 15 themes and these are student academic outcomes, collaborative or shared leadership, parental engagement activities, teachers' perceptions of parental engagement, learning resources, parents' perceptions of parental engagement, schools' communication, parent center workshops, school climate, Title I resources, students' behavior, school culture, community

resources, students' attendance and school diversity. From the data analysis, the researcher examined each research question to determine if any relationship exists.

RQ1: Is there a relationship between principal's leadership style and parental engagement?

The theme of principals' leadership style was evident in all four interviews and it was also evident in the teacher and parent surveys. This theme was also described by both principals as a collaborative or shared leadership when it comes to parental engagement.

One of the principals stated the following:

I would say that my approach is to you as shared leadership, you know I very much believe in you know, having and bringing as many people to the table as possible to help make the best decision for the community and the school. I don't have all the answers you know and I don't look at it that way and nor do I come across as a top down type of style. You know, I like very much to let things to some extent kind of come from the grass roots or the ground level. (Principal's Interview, Middle School B, December 1, 2017)

The findings from this study indicate that there is a substantial relationship between principal's leadership style and parental engagement.

RQ2: How do teachers' perceptions influence parental engagement?

From all the data sources that were analyzed the conclusion can be made that teachers' perceptions do influence parental engagement. While some of the participants stated that teachers were very supportive of parental engagement, others expressed uncertainty and believed that some teachers' actions may in fact not be very encouraging

to parents to become involved in their children's education. The parent Liaison at Middle School B expressed a similar sentiment and explained that some teachers are not flexible in meeting with parents and are not very understanding of parents' schedules, especially parents who have fixed work schedules. The findings therefore indicate that there is a substantial relationship between teachers' perceptions and parental engagement.

RQ3: Is there a relationship between school climate and parental engagement?

Both principals explained the importance of a positive school climate to promoting parental engagement in their schools. The principal at Middle School B was confident that his school demonstrates a very positive school climate and this was confirmed by both parent liaisons at that same school. They claim that their school is very welcoming and supportive of their diverse student and parent population. However, on the other hand the principal at Middle School A as well as the parent liaison both agree that there is room for improving their school climate. Therefore, from all the responses that addressed this research question from the interviews and surveys it can be concluded or it appears that there is a substantial relationship between school climate and parental engagement.

RQ4: Is there a relationship between the schools' use of technology in communicating with parents and the level of parental engagement?

This research question was addressed by the principals' interviews, teacher and parent surveys, focus group discussion, parent liaisons' interviews and the document analysis. This was one of the dominant themes that emerged throughout this study. Most or all of the participants described their communication methods with families using

technology and one principal expressed the belief that this communication does have a large effect on the level of parental engagement. He stated the following:

Again, I mean if you are communicating lots and lots of different ways, I think that's going to encourage them to get or be involved. If there's a lack of communication or they seem that they can't get information then that's going to make things very negative right, maybe turn them off. You know, they may engage with you in a not so nice way to let you know how misinformed they are but that hurts, you know. When it comes down to having a critical conversation or when you need them they are not going to be there for you because they don't trust you because of your miscommunication. (Principal Interview, Middle School B, December 1, 2017)

From the findings that were obtained from principals' interviews, teacher and parent surveys, interviews with parent liaisons and the document analysis, there appear to be a substantial relationship between the school's use of communication and the level of parental engagement.

RQ5: Is there a relationship between parents' perceptions of parental engagement and their actual level of engagement?

The interviews of the principals' and the parent liaisons' interviews as well as teacher and parent surveys and the focus group discussion all addressed this research question. Most participants expressed their belief that parents' behavior and their perceptions with regards to parental engagement are influenced by their experiences and their interactions with the environment. The parent liaison at Middle School A described

how some parents feel intimidated by school leadership and that she believes it has affected their involvement. She commented,

But I think they intimidate parents because they are dressed nice, you know, many of our parents don't have that. And I feel like a lot of our parents, well this has been expressed to me. Many of the parents feel you know that they're being judged when they come in here. Or that they are just trying to get them in and get them out, if that makes sense. (Parent Liaison Interview, Middle School A, November, 29, 2017)

Therefore, the conclusion can be made from several responses that were obtained from different participants in the study that it appears that the parents' perceptions do influence their level of engagement. It seems that parents' own experiences as students as well as their experiences when interacting with the schools' teachers and leadership at their children's school do influence how they perceive parental engagement. Therefore, this will influence whether or not or to what extent parents will become involved.

RQ6: Is there a relationship between school culture and parental engagement?

School culture emerged as a dominant theme in this study. The principals in their interviews emphasized the significance of school culture to improving parental engagement. The teachers expounded on the fact they do have a positive school culture at their respective schools. In the focus group discussion, one of the parents spoke about the school culture and how the school has to support the parents so that they can support their children. She continued by stating that,

Because I think a lot of it has to do with them not seeing, not being in the comfort zone because of the language barrier whatever or social barrier, whatever, so they don't feel comfortable but the more they come and get empowered then they can empower their children. I think that helps. (Focus Group Discussion, Middle School B, December 1, 2017)

The findings from this study indicate that parents will respond to parental engagement if they perceive of their school as having a positive and inclusive school culture. Therefore, the conclusion can be made that there is a substantial relationship between school culture and parental engagement.

RQ7: What is the relationship between students' attendance and parental engagement?

Students' attendance is one of the themes that emerged from this study. Both principals explained that there is a correlation between students' attendance and parental engagement. The teachers responded overwhelmingly that there is a relationship between students' attendance and parental engagement. While teachers expressed their belief that there is a positive relationship between students' attendance and parental engagement, the parents' responses represented a smaller percentage compared to the teachers. The parents explained that school and parent communication is critical to helping parents to become informed about students' attendance. One principal reiterated the point that how much value families place on education will in fact influence the students' attendance. However, the findings from all participants in this study do contribute to the conclusion

that there appears to be a substantial relationship between parental engagement and students' attendance.

RQ 8: What is the relationship between students' discipline and parental engagement?

The participants in this study that include principals, teachers and parents agree that there is a relationship between parental engagement and students' discipline. However, at least 50% of both the parents and the teachers' response was that parental engagement did not have such a positive influence on students' behavior. Therefore, the findings from this study indicate that there might be a relationship between students' discipline and parental engagement but that it does not appear to be a substantial one.

RQ 9: What is the level of engagement parents have in Title I funded schools?

The principals and parent liaisons described the mandatory policies that have been established by the federal government to enhance school and family partnerships. The participants including teachers, parents and parent liaisons expounded on the involvement of parents and families in parental engagement programs at Title I Schools. One principal provided a list of the various programs at the school that promote parental involvement and this includes the PTA and the Local School Governance. The Federal Title I Program has afforded Title I Schools with required funding that has allowed schools to purchase and make various programs accessible to their parents. Therefore, it can be assumed from the participants' responses that it seems like there is a fairly high level of parental engagement at Title I funded schools.

RQ10: Is there a relationship between students' academic achievement and parental engagement?

There was an overwhelming response from all participants that parental engagement has a positive impact on students' academic performance. The principal at Middle School A stated the following:

I think in research and in parents who value education and overly communicate that to their child not only through conversations but in support and working with them at the table; the results are always positive in terms of how their child performs in school. (Principal Interview, Middle School A, November 29, 2017)

Both principals agree that from their own experiences they have observed that children whose parents are involved tend to perform better in school. One of the principals stated the following:

Well, research and practice prove that from maximum years of working in education that those parents who are highly engaged and aware of where their child is academically in terms of their performance are always and will fare well than those parents who are less engaged and do not value their education.

(Principal Interview, Middle School A, November 29, 2017)

One of the dominant themes that emerged from this study is students' academic outcomes. All the Title I documents emphasized the significance of promoting students' academic performance through parental engagement. The conclusion can be made from the findings in this study that there is a substantial relationship between parental engagement and students' academic performance.

RQ11: Is there a relationship between parents' use of the parent center and parental engagement?

This research question was addressed by the parent liaisons, the principals, parents and teachers. Less than 50% of parents responded positively that the parent center has the required technological resources that they need. One principal was very forthright in describing the resources that are available to parents in the parent center. He continued by explaining that they provide technological resources through their parent center and parents are always welcome to use the resources. Principal B mentioned specifically the "Rosetta Stone" which is used by the Hispanic parents in learning how to speak English. He remarked,

But I think you know, the parent liaisons, they provide a lot of opportunities for that community particularly the moms to come in and get involved. Whether it's to use the parent resources, we also have 'Rosetta Stone' so we've got a whole group of parents that come in and learn how to speak English. So they're trying you know and as they try and as they see you know their involvement in the school impacts their child. I think they tell the story and then more people will come. (Parent Interview, Middle School B, December 1, 2017)

Meanwhile, the parent liaison at Middle School A described the lack of adequate resources at their parent center and the transportation challenges that their parents face in visiting the parent center. She commented,

I think that the parent center here could play a major role if the parents have the resources to actually come in here and use it. So parents do have to come in here

to check things out but being that transportation is such a major issue, it's kind of dead. The parent resource center is kind of dead which is why it has just two computers because maybe when the parent population increases we can get into a bigger room or have those kinds of things. (Parent Liaison Interview, Middle School A, November 29, 2017)

From the feedback and responses from the participants in this study it can be concluded that one parent center is fully equipped with technology and other resources for parents' use. This has allowed parents to utilize these resources on a regular basis and has ultimately encouraged increased parental engagement. Meanwhile, the other parent center at Middle School A seems to be less adequately equipped with technological resources. The parent liaison at that Middle School A reiterated the point that if more computers were available for parents' use then definitely they would see an increased use of technology at the parent center. She further explained that more parents would become involved if more resources were available to parents. Therefore, it can be concluded that it appears that there is a substantial relationship between parents' use of the parent center and parental engagement.

RQ12: What is the relationship between the school's funding of the parent center and parental engagement?

The participants in this study agree that if the parent center is well funded and equipped with numerous resources then it will influence increased parental engagement. The principal at Middle School B and the parent liaisons expounded on the fact that their parent center is well funded and parents and the community offer tremendous support in

numerous ways. However, the Parent liaison at Middle School A bemoaned the fact that a lack of technological and other resources and the absence of adequate community support have demonstrated a negative effect on parental engagement activities and the use of the parent center.

Both Parent Liaisons at Middle School B articulated the support and the resources that their parent resource centers have received from their community partners. These include Movie Nights, Hispanic Heritage Month, and donations of children's clothing, notebooks, food supplies and mentoring by one local church. The principal at Middle School B described how parental engagement activities that are supported by their community partners affect parental engagement. He stated the following:

And we do a huge job of you know Hispanic Heritage month and we've got this huge luncheon at the end and the parent liaison really turns it over to the community and it's unbelievable. I mean they turn out and then they cook all the food, they're so proud of. It's really tremendous and then we have this taste of our local 'city' in the winter where it's a big night and the same thing occurs. You know the whole community comes and food is all over the school and entertainers are here and kids put on academic stuff and it's just a lot of fun. And so I think you know, as parents that weren't comfortable come in and see it's not that scary then I think you see a great positive impact that occurs as a result of that.

(Principal Interview, Middle school B, December 1, 2017)

Based on the participants' responses and the findings from this study, the conclusion is that the funding of the parent center will influence the level of parental

engagement. Therefore, it appears that there exists a relationship between the funding of the parent centers and parental engagement.

Conclusions and Implications

The findings from this study have provided deep insight into the factors that influence parental engagement in Title I Urban Middle schools. More specifically, this qualitative study has revealed that the factors of school leadership, school culture and teachers' perceptions do have an impact on parental engagement. After conducting a careful coding and analysis of the data from this study, several conclusions can be made with regards to the dependent variable of parental engagement and the independent variables. These variables do have an effect on parental engagement in Title I Urban Middle Schools: principals' leadership style, teachers' perceptions of parental engagement, school climate, schools' use of technology in communicating with parents, the level of parental engagement in Title I Urban Middle Schools, parents' perceptions of parental engagement, school culture, students' attendance, students' behavior, students' academic achievement, parents use of the parent center, and schools' funding of the parent center.

Dominant Themes

The four most dominant themes that were derived from this study include principals' leadership style, technological communication, teachers' perceptions of parental engagement and school culture. All of the participants discussed how the principal's leadership style has helped to promote parental engagement. The findings from this study indicate that a collaborative or distributed leadership style is significant to

working and collaborating with all stakeholders. This is supported by research finding that demonstrates that a principal's leadership style, communication, attitudes and expectations play a significant role in helping to shape the school's culture and in facilitating parental engagement (Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014). The findings from this study especially as it pertains to the school principal in collaborating with all stakeholders and partnering with the community is supported by the literature. Mleckzo and Kingston, (2013) argued that when school leaders and principals practice a collaborative and distributed school leadership and involve all stakeholders they will become more successful in improving parental engagement. However, the conclusions from the findings also demonstrate that a principal's length of service at a particular school will influence teachers and parents' perceptions of his leadership style and his ability develop partnerships and to improving parental engagement.

Schools' technological communication was the most dominant theme that emerged from the study. The principals, teachers, parent liaisons and parents all discussed how vital it is for schools to communicate with families through various forms of technology. The participants agreed that effective communication between the school and families is critical to helping parents stay informed about their children's progress and for them to become more involved. The literature is very clear and convincing when it comes to the effective use of school and family communication. Rogers and Wright (2008) made an important point that technology is vital to middle school parents and it provides them with an effective tool to actively participate in their children's education. They further describe the benefits of parents having the ability to remain at a distance

while communicating with the school and their teachers. According to Rogers and Wright, technological communication will allow parents to be involved and to continue to fostering the independence of their adolescents and to provide a supportive environment.

Teachers' perception of parental engagement was another dominant theme that emerged in this study. The majority of the teachers believed that they are very supportive of parents; they are always willing to accommodate parent conferences and are quite flexible in meeting the needs of students and parents. However, some parents have a slightly different view and expressed their beliefs that teachers are not always accommodating and sometimes are not very encouraging when it comes to parental engagement. The literature describes the effect teachers' perceptions can have on parental engagement and how this can influence parents' decision to partner with the school. Baum and Swick (2008) claimed that when teachers display negative attitudes and are not very cooperative with parents it might be as a result of their preconceived ideas about the parents. They state that the teachers' ideas and perceptions might hinder them from engaging with parents and developing partnerships with families. The findings from this study indicate that some teachers are not very cooperative and they are not engaged with parents and this conclusion is supported by the literature.

School culture represents the fourth dominant theme that emerged from this study. Principals as well as the teachers and parents emphasized the significance of fostering a positive school culture that is inclusive and supportive of all parents and students. The participants believed that school culture is important to promoting

increased parental engagement and improved students' performance. Parents agreed that a positive school culture can be a motivating factor for them on whether or not they should become engaged and the extent of their involvement. School culture can be quite complex and is viewed through different lens by different people. Stoll (2002) explained that school culture is a critical aspect and can be complicated at times. He described how significant it is for school leaders to recognize and address the beliefs of teachers and staff in an attempt to foster a positive school culture and school reform initiatives.

The theories that provide the theoretical framework for this research must be examined in relation to the findings of the study in order to determine the strength and significance of the findings.

Transformational Leadership

From the interviews that were conducted with both principals, interviews with each parent liaison and from the focus group discussion with the parents, it was revealed that the schools' leaders play a critical role in promoting parental engagement. The principals illuminated their shared leadership style and expounded on how they are able to acquire the support, commitment and cooperation from different stakeholders. They also have expressed their beliefs and obligation to allowing these stakeholders to not only be a vital component of the decision making process but also to take the lead in several school related activities and parental engagement programs. The principals have identified a set of shared values that stakeholders have embraced in helping to foster the vision that they have created for their schools. They hope to increase parental and family

engagement with the goal of improving students' academic outcomes which will help to transform their schools into successful institutions.

Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory was quite evident from this study and it was further demonstrated in the interviews that were conducted with the principals, both parent liaisons' interviews and from the teacher and parent surveys. The data that were collected provided insight into the parents' behavior and what motivates them to become involved in parental engagement programs. This social cognitive theory helps to explain human behavior and how parents' personal experiences and environmental influences impact their behavior. The findings from this study with regards to the behavior of parents and their level of parental engagement are directly aligned with social cognitive theory. The experiences that parents encountered when they were students, their interactions with their children's teachers and administrators, observations of other behavior as well as their own individual environment contribute to their human behavior. This is helpful in determining whether or not and to what extent parents are motivated to become involved in their children's education.

Cultural Capital Theory

Cultural capital theory is one of the theoretical frameworks for this study and its connection to education was certainly highlighted in this study. This theory helps to provide a clear understanding of the disparity in the education system between those students who possess cultural capital and those who do not. The relationship between cultural capital and education highlights serious concerns for students who are at a

disadvantage. The Federal Government and Title I programs have identified and recognized the inequality that exists among disadvantaged students and they have therefore mandated Title I schools to develop and implement parental engagement programs. Education is regarded as a pathway to success for many students, but those that lack cultural capital are at a disadvantage. Therefore, from this study and its subsequent findings it was evident that the majority of students at the Title I schools where this research was conducted need extra support from schools and the Federal Government. This support will offer students improved opportunities in order to be successful. Therefore, these Title I schools that receive funding from the Federal Government promote parental engagement as an effective means of supporting these students' academic outcomes and of closing the achievement gap.

Limitations

There is one limitation present in this study that cannot be overlooked and it is the fact that there was not a large population of parents who participated in the surveys. The researcher collected pertinent data from numerous participants including 70 teachers, two principals and two parent liaisons. However, it was a small number of parents who participated in the parent survey even though the researcher made every attempt in seeking a higher rate of participation from parents. In fact, the researcher was successful in collecting data from only 14 parents' surveys. In addition to that, only two parents attended and contributed to the focus group discussion on parental engagement. Time became a huge challenge for the researcher as she faced several obstacles and delays in gaining access to the schools that were chosen to conduct research. Eventually, approval

was given by the schools' leaders but this was toward the end of the semester and closer to the holidays. This was a time when many parents became pre occupied with other activities and were not being focused on their children's activities at schools. Hence, more of them did not take the time to complete the survey instruments and return them to the researcher. In light of the fact that this study is focused on gaining insights and understanding into the factors that influence parental engagement, it would have been more valuable to have access to an improved number of parents. This would allow an increased number of parents to offer their ideas, perceptions and thoughts on parental engagement. This would contribute useful information to the findings and the validity of the study would have been strengthened

Recommendations

Recommendations for Local School Leaders

Parental engagement continues to be regarded by the Federal Government as a critical initiative to improving students' academic outcomes in Title I schools. Fullan (1985) includes parental engagement in their lists of significant organizational variables that contribute to effective schools. The following recommendations are made for local school administrators:

- According to research question number 1: school leaders should recognize and utilize technological communication as a central component of improving parental involvement in 21st century schools.

- According to research question number 2: schools should provide sensitivity training for teachers to focus on recognizing parents as equal partners in building partnership and collaboration
- According to research question number 2: school leaders must become intentional about creating an environment of trust and informing parents by the development of a comprehensive communication plan to ensure that parents are aware of all events that impact their children.
- According to research question number 3: administrators, teachers and staff should develop and sustain a positive and inclusive school climate and incorporate parents in different roles and responsibilities
- According to research question number 6: schools should regard parents and families as equal partners and thus, they should be involved in the decision making process at the local school level.
- According to research question number 12: school leaders should identify community partners and business organizations that are integral to contributing to the successful operation of the school and providing valuable resources for students, teachers and parents.

Recommendations for School District Level Leadership

There are numerous recommendations for leaders and administrators at central office that can be adopted in an effort to promote, develop, improve and sustain an effective parent and family involvement program. These recommendations can contribute to a healthy and successful school with improved students' outcomes. These are:

- Redefine the parental engagement program with an emphasis on electronic communication so that that parents and families can become more involved by utilizing more technological devices with their teachers and local schools.
- Provide training for parents, families and community stakeholders on effective communications and partnering skills with schools.
- Survey teachers, families, administrators and community stakeholders to obtain ideas and interests on how to create a diverse and effective parental involvement program.
- Provide regular training and assistance in helping families navigate the school's system and understanding requirements for their children's promotion and graduation.
- Offer professional development to all teachers and staff on parental and family involvement activities and how to form partnerships with the families and the community.
- Ensure effective and timely communication to parents and families on the district's website by providing information in languages that all families can understand.

Policy Recommendations

State educational agencies and other local governing bodies can legislate and implement statutes and establish policies to ensure the enactment of research based parental involvement programs in all schools. These are:

- Authorize laws that mandate professional development of school district officials and local school leaders including but not limited to the superintendent and principals to develop, support and maintain effective parent involvement programs.
- Adopt laws and policies that offer protection for all families and guarantee that employers provide adequate time to all their employees to attend school related activities at their children's schools.
- Authorize the redefinition and use of parental engagement and its programs by all educational agencies and stakeholders to include and incorporate an emphasis on parental involvement and communication through electronic means.
- Mandate all local educational agencies to create educational programs and training for parents and families including GED.

Research Recommendations

Parental engagement remains a central component of how schools can improve student academic outcomes. Therefore, future research in this area is recommended to garner deeper insights into this topic.

- This study can be replicated by employing a greater number of parents in participating in the surveys.
- Replicate this study and utilize open ended interviews of some parents as one of the data sources to obtain deeper insights and understanding of parental engagement..
- This study could be replicated to include a focus group discussion of a diverse group of students as one of the data sources. .
- Conduct future research on parental engagement with a concentration on technology and communicating solely through electronic devices to determine its influence on parental involvement.
- Design a study that targets specific minority groups like Latino parents and families to examine their perceptions, expectations, practices and participation in parental engagement programs and its effect on students' academic outcomes.

Summary

The completion of this qualitative study generated deep insights, invaluable information and extrapolated findings that contribute to and corroborate with the body of research on parental engagement. This qualitative study was undertaken to examine how the factors of school leadership, school culture and teachers' perceptions influence parental engagement in Title I Urban Middle schools and the findings substantiated the influence of these factors. The results of all the data sources documented and established the significant impact of school leadership, school culture and teachers' perceptions on

parental engagement. The open ended interviews of both principals proffered a wealth of information on how their leadership and guidance was instrumental in advocating for, promoting and collaborating with all stakeholders to advance and strengthen parental engagement. Their ability to motivate and empower staff, to foster capacity and cultivate and maintain relationships was influential in creating and fostering parental engagement. School culture and its significance to parental engagement was revealed and highlighted from the document analysis, teachers' and parents' surveys, interviews and focus group discussions. Different participants expounded on how the school emphasizes and accentuates the significance of cultivating and upholding a positive school culture in order to reinforce parental engagement. Vital information was extracted from the teachers' surveys and from the interviews that elucidated the relation between teachers' perceptions and parental engagement. This illustrates and confirms that teachers' communications, interactions and collaborations with parents and families do influence parental engagement. This study also yielded insights into the teacher's influence and ability to take control of, their contribution and influence in helping to shape how the parents perceive and participate in parental involvement programs.

This research underlines and validates the relationships that exist between the dependent variable of parental engagement and the independent variables. More specifically, an exploration and analysis of the data revealed that principals' leadership style, teachers' perceptions of parental engagement, school culture, schools' use of technology in communicating, parents' perceptions of parental engagement, school climate, students' attendance, students' behavior, , parents' use of the parent center,

students' academic achievement, schools' funding of the parent center and the level of parental engagement in urban middle schools all have an effect on parental engagement. This qualitative study achieved its purpose and unearthed noteworthy and significant information on parental engagement and it contributes to the body of research on parental engagement. Additionally, applicable recommendations were made toward educational leaders at central office and local administrators who are charged with constructing and sustaining effective parental engagement programs. Finally, policy recommendations were made to state educational agencies that are charged with the responsibility of crafting and designing educational programs that are equitable, justifiable and fair to meet the needs of all the children in the state. These policy recommendations will seek to implore state agencies to formulate statutes and policies to address the challenges that minority students face at Title I schools. These strategies and procedures will help to establish parental engagement practices and programs that are focused on improving students' academic outcomes and closing the achievement gap of minority students

APPENDIX A

Coding Matrix

Research Questions	Principal Interview	Parent Coordinator Interview	Teacher Surveys	Parent Surveys	Document Analyses: Title I Parent Surveys	Observations at Parent Centers	Focus Group
RQ1. What is the relationship between principal's leadership style and parental engagement?	x	x	x		x		x
RQ2. How do teachers' perceptions affect parental engagement?	x	x	X	x		x	X
RQ3. Is there a significant relationship between school climate and parental engagement?	x		X	x		x	X
RQ4. Is there a significant relationship between the schools' use of technology in communicating with parents and the level of parental engagement?	x	x	X	x		x	x
RQ5. Is there a significant relationship between parents' perceptions of parental engagement and their actual level of engagement?	x	X	X	x		x	X

Research Questions	Principal Interview	Parent Coordinator Interview	Teacher Surveys	Parent Surveys	Document Analyses: Title I Parent Surveys	Observations at Parent Centers	Focus Group
RQ6. What is the relationship between school culture and parental engagement?	x	x	X	x		x	X
RQ8. Is there a relationship between students' discipline and parental engagement?	x		X	x		x	X
RQ9. How does the schools' leadership Implementation of Federal Title I Guidelines affect parental engagement?	x	x	X		x		
RQ10. Is there a significant relationship between students' academic achievement and parental engagement?	x		X	x		x	x
RQ11. Is there a significant relationship between parents' use of the Parent Center and parental engagement?	x	x			x	x	x
RQ12. What is the relationship between the schools' funding of the Parent Center and parental engagement?	x	x			x	x	x

APPENDIX B

Teachers' Survey Protocol

Introduction

The following document will be administered in the form of a survey. You will be required to respond to a number of questions. Questions will pertain to your experiences as a teacher and to parental engagement activities at your school.

All responses will remain confidential. Please answer each question to the best of your ability.

Your time and cooperation are greatly appreciated. Thank you for your time.

Description of the Study

This study will identify how the factors of school leadership, school culture and teachers' perceptions affect parental engagement in two Title I Urban Middle Schools. This study will further investigate the strategies and programs that have an impact on parental engagement and to determine how these can be used to improve parental engagement in Title I Urban Middle Schools.

1. Please fill in your initials; (first, middle, and last) _____
2. Name of your school; _____.
3. Please select one of the following: Male Female
4. American Indian/Native Alaskan Asian Black/African American
Hispanic/ Latino Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander White
5. What grade level do you teach?
grade 6 grade 7 grade 8
6. How many years have you been teaching?
1 – 5 6 – 10 11 – 15 16 or more
7. How many years have you been teaching at this school?
1-5 6 – 10 11 - 15 16 or more

APPENDIX C

Teacher's Survey Questions

Please answer “always, sometimes or never” to the following questions.
Please provide only one response per question.

Questions	Always	Sometimes	Never
(RQ1) 1. Our principal recognizes the importance of parental engagement and therefore places emphasis on parental engagement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(RQ1) 2. Our principal creates and develops programs to encourage parental engagement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(RQ2) 3. Our principal provides opportunities for parents to be involved in the decision making process of the school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(RQ2) 4. I believe teachers recognize the importance of parental engagement and they do encourage parental engagement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(RQ2) 5. I believe teachers will change their schedule to accommodate parental engagement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(RQ 3) 6. I believe our school welcomes and values all parents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(RQ 3) 7. I believe our school has a warm and inviting environment for all parents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(RQ 4) 8. Our school uses various forms of technology to communicate with parents; this includes emails, phone calls, podcasts, newsletters, text messages, twitter and websites	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Always	Sometimes	Never
(RQ5) 9. I believe parents who are engaged in their children's education can have a positive impact on the students' academic performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(RQ 6)10. Our school recognizes the significance of building partnerships with parents and families	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(RQ 7)11. I believe when parents are engaged in their children's education, this has a positive impact on their attendance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(RQ8) 12. The school encourages and implements regular and consistent communication with parents in an effort to Improve students' behavior.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(RQ8) 13. The school provides parents with information and resources to help support students who have disciplinary problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(RQ10)14. When students receive parental support in their learning, they demonstrate more interest in their academics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(RQ10)15. The school provides teachers with a variety of educational resources that they utilize to help in informing parents concerning their children's academic studies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(RQ10)16. The school provides parents with academic progress reports of their children and they emphasize the importance of parents becoming engaged in their children's learning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

APPENDIX D

Parents' Survey Protocol

Introduction

The following document will be administered in the form of a survey. You will be required to respond to a number of questions. Questions will pertain to your experiences as a parent and to the parental engagement activities at your child's school.

All responses will remain confidential. Please answer each question to the best of your ability.

Your time and cooperation are greatly appreciated. Thank you for your time.

Description of the Study

This study will identify how the factors of school leadership, school culture and teachers' perceptions affect parental engagement in two Title I Urban Middle Schools. This study will further investigate the strategies and programs that have an impact on parental engagement and to determine how these can be used to improve parental engagement in Title I Urban Middle Schools.

1. Please fill in your initials; (first, middle, and last) _____
2. Name of your school _____

APPENDIX E

Parents' Survey Questions

Parents Demographics

Please mark one response only that best pertains to you and your family.

Please mark the appropriate box only.

1. Parents' Level of Education Reached	
a. I completed high school or I have a GED	<input type="radio"/>
b. I completed technical certification or I have an associate degree	<input type="radio"/>
c. I completed a bachelor's degree program	<input type="radio"/>
d. I completed a graduate program	<input type="radio"/>
e. I completed a post graduate degree; (i.e. Doctorate, Law, Medical or other)	<input type="radio"/>
f. I have another form of education not listed; Please state	<input type="radio"/>
2. Parents' Socioeconomic Level	
a. My child(ren) receive free or reduced lunch	<input type="radio"/>
b. I pay the full price for my child(ren)'s lunch	<input type="radio"/>
3. Parents' Race	
a. Asian Pacific Islander	<input type="radio"/>
b. Black or African American (Non-Hispanic)	<input type="radio"/>
c. Hispanic or Latino	<input type="radio"/>
d. Native American or American Indian	<input type="radio"/>
e. White (Non-Hispanic)	<input type="radio"/>

4. Primary Home Language	
a. English	<input type="radio"/>
b. Spanish	<input type="radio"/>
c. Other (Please state)	<input type="radio"/>

Please answer “always, sometimes or never” to the following questions.

Parents' Surveys	Always	Sometimes	Never
(RQ1) 1. The school's principal attends Title I Parent Meetings and encourages parents to be involved in their children's education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(RQ2) 2. Teachers keep me informed and they provide Regular progress reports of my child(ren)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(RQ2) 3. Teachers are very flexible and they will change their schedule to accommodate meeting me to discuss my child(ren)'s progress	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(RQ2) 4. I believe the teachers want me to participate in my children's education and they provide encouragement and support.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(RQ3) 5. The school staff recognizes and respects my ethnicity and culture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(RQ3) 6. The school has a warm and inviting environment and this sparks my interest and enthusiasm in becoming more involved	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(RQ3) 6. I feel valued and welcome when I visit the school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(RQ4) 7. I receive regular and consistent communication from the school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(RQ4) 8. I receive communication from the school in several different formats; this includes emails, text messages, telephone calls, newsletters and school and teacher websites	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(RQ6) 9. The school communicates with me through a language I can understand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(RQ6)10. I am encouraged by the teachers and the school leadership to communicate my concerns and questions that relate to my child(ren)'s education.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Parents' Surveys	Always	Sometimes	Never
(RQ6)11. I am more interested in participating in school activities and to become more involved in my children's education if I believe the school and the teachers value my support and my input	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(RQ7)12. My parental involvement helps me to monitor my child's attendance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(RQ8)13. Being involved helps me to be in constant communication with the school and to monitor my child's behavior	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(RQ10)14. Through parental engagement I help my child with homework and ensure that his/her assignments are done	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(RQ11)15. The Parent Center is equipped with educational resources to help me in supporting my child(ren)'s education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(RQ11)16. The Parent Center has technology available so that I can utilize it to stay informed of my child(ren)'s grades and their progress	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(RQ12)17. I receive support from the staff at the Parent Center and they help me to understand my child(ren)'s grades and how the education system works	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

APPENDIX F

Principal's Interview Protocol

Introduction

The following document will be administered in the form of an interview. You will be required to respond to a number of questions. Questions will pertain to your experiences as the principal and to the parental engagement activities at your school.

All responses will remain confidential. Please answer each question to the best of your ability. Your time and cooperation are greatly appreciated. Thank you for your time.

Description of the Study

This study will identify how the factors of school leadership, school culture and teachers' perceptions affect parental engagement in two Title I Urban Middle Schools. This study will further investigate the strategies and programs that have an impact on parental engagement and to determine how these can be used to improve parental engagement in Title I Urban Middle schools.

Principal's Interview Protocol

Time of Interview: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Interviewee: _____

Position of Interviewee: _____

1. Please fill in your initials; (first, middle and last) _____
2. Name of your school: _____
3. Please select one of the following: Male Female
4. American Indian/Native Alaskan Asian Black/African American
Hispanic / Latino Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander White
5. How many years have you been a principal?
1 – 5 6 – 10 over 10
6. How many years have you been a principal at this school?
1 – 5 6 – 10 over 10

APPENDIX G

Principal's Interview Questions

- (RQ1) 1. How would you describe your leadership style?
- (RQ1) 2. How does a principal's leadership style impact parental engagement?
- (RQ1) 3. What is your philosophy on education?
- (RQ2) 4. Describe the teachers' perceptions of parental engagement and whether or not they do have an impact on parental engagement.
- (RQ2) 5. Is the level of parental engagement affected by teachers' attitudes and beliefs about parental engagement?
- (RQ3) 6. What is the school's vision and how does it incorporate parental engagement?
- (RQ3) 7. How would you describe your school's climate?
- (RQ3) 8. How does a school's climate affect parental engagement?
- (RQ4) 9. Describe how the school communicates with its parents and the community
- (RQ4) 10. How do the school's communication methods influence parental engagement?
- (RQ5) 11. Describe how parents' perceptions of parental engagement impact their actual level of engagement
- (RQ6) 12. Describe your school's culture.
- (RQ6) 13. What kind of impact does the school's culture have on parental engagement?
- (RQ7) 14. How does parental engagement influence students' attendance?

- (RQ8) 15. How do the parents' involvements in their children's education affect their discipline and behavior at school?
- (RQ9) 16. As the principal, how do you implement the Federal Title I Guidelines and what is the influence on the level of parental engagement at your school?
- (RQ9) 17. What are the school's priorities in terms of programs and resources and how do they utilize Federal Title I Funds?
- (RQ10) 18. Describe the impact if any that parental engagement has on students' academic performance in school.
- (RQ10) 19. How would you describe the academic achievement of students whose parents are engaged in their education compared to other students whose parents are not engaged?
- (RQ11) 20. What kinds of technological resources are provided by the school to be used by 21st century teachers?
- (RQ11) 21. How does the parents' use of the parent center influence their level of parental engagement?
- (RQ11) 22. Describe the school's philosophy and their investment of federal funds to provide a parent center for families to utilize.
- (RQ12) 23. Describe the funding of the Parent Center in terms of the resources that are available to parents and how does this affect their level of engagement?
- (RQ12) 24. Does the school believe that the parent center provides a positive return in terms of improved parent engagement and their impact on students overall discipline, attendance and performance.

APPENDIX H

Parent Center Liaison Interview Protocol

Introduction

The following document will be administered in the form of an interview. You will be required to respond to a number of questions. Questions will pertain to your experiences as the Parent Center Coordinator and to the parental engagement activities at your school. All responses will remain confidential. Please answer each question to the best of your ability.

Your time and cooperation are greatly appreciated. Thank you for your time.

Description of the Study

This study will identify how the factors of school leadership, school culture and teachers' perceptions affect parental engagement in two Title I Urban Middle Schools. This study will further investigate the strategies and programs that have an impact on parental engagement and to determine how these can be used to improve parental engagement in Title I Urban Middle schools.

Parent Center Liaison's Interview Protocol _____

Time of Interview: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Interview: _____

Interviewee: _____

Position of Interviewee: _____

1. Please fill in your initials; (first, middle and last) _____

2. Name of your school: _____

3. Date _____

4. Please select one of the following: Male Female

5. American Indian/Native Alaskan Asian Black/African American
Hispanic / Latino Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander White
6. How many years have you been teaching/ working in education?
1-5 6 – 10 11 – 15 16 or more
7. How many years have you been teaching/working at this school?
1-5 6 – 10 11 – 15 16 or more
8. How many years have you been working as the Parent Center Coordinator at this school?
1-5 6 – 10 11 – 15 16 or more

APPENDIX I

Parent Center Liaison Interview Questions

Please answer these questions to the best of your ability

- (RQ1) 1. How would you describe the leadership style of the principal?
- (RQ1) 2. How do parental engagement activities that the school develops and implements affect the level of parental engagement?
- (RQ2) 3. Describe the teachers' attitude toward parental engagement and explain whether or not or how they encourage parents to utilize the parent center.
- (RQ3) 4. How does the school climate affect parental engagement?
- (RQ3) 5. Does the school value and welcome all families regardless of their cultures?
- (RQ4) 6. How would you describe the different methods that the school uses to communicate with parents?
- (RQ4) 7. Explain to what extent parents make use of technology at the parent center and what kinds of technology are available to them.
- (RQ4) 8. How does the school ensure that all parents and families understand the school's communication about their children's progress?
- (RQ5) 9. How would you describe parents' perceptions' toward parental engagement?
- (RQ6) 10. How would you describe the school's culture and its impact if any on parental engagement?
- (RQ6) 11. How do parents perceive the school's culture?
- (RQ9)12. How does the school leadership implement Federal Title I guidelines with fidelity?
- (RQ11)13. Describe the kinds of educational resources that are available to teachers and how do these impact parental engagements?

- (RQ 11) 14. What role if any does the Parent Center play in increasing the level of parental engagement? How?
- (RQ 11) 15. How do teachers change their schedules to accommodate parents and encourage parental engagement?
- (RQ11) 16. Explain how parents utilize the resources at the Parent Center; how do these resources affect their level of parental engagement?
- (RQ11) 17. What do you think is important to parents in terms of parental engagement and what influences their level of engagement?
- (RQ11) 18. Describe the approximate number of parents who utilize the Parent Center on a daily basis and state whether or not parents believe that the center is providing a useful service.
- (RQ11) 19. Describe the kinds of parent meetings that are held at the parent Center and their frequency. What would be an approximate average number of parents who attend the meetings?
- (RQ11) 20. Explain your role as a Parent Center Coordinator and what influence it has on parental engagement.
- (RQ12) 21. Describe the role of the principal in terms of providing funding for the Parent Center.
- (RQ12) 22. Are there any other resources that parents have requested or desired for use at the Parent Center that are currently not available? Explain

APPENDIX J

Parents' Focus Group Protocol

Introduction

You will be required to respond to a number of questions and participate in a discussion. Questions will pertain to your experiences as a parent and to the parental engagement activities at your child's school.

All responses will remain confidential. Please answer each question to the best of your ability.

Your time and cooperation are greatly appreciated. Thank you for your time.

Description of the Study

This study will identify how the factors of school leadership, school culture and teachers' perceptions affect parental engagement in two Title I Urban Middle Schools. This study will further investigate the strategies and programs that have an impact on parental engagement and to determine how these can be used to improve parental engagement in Title I Urban Middle Schools.

1. Please fill in your initials; (first, middle, and last) _____
2. Name of your school: _____
3. Date _____
4. Time of Focus group discussion: _____

APPENDIX K

Focus Group Discussion Questions

- (RQ1) 1. How would you describe the principal's initiatives to improve parental engagement?
- (RQ2) 2. How do teachers promote high levels of parent involvement in their students' education?
- (RQ3) 3. What are some challenges that principals face in developing parental engagement Programs?
- (RQ4) 4. How can the school use technology to improve parental engagement?
- (RQ5) 5. What challenges do parents face that affect their level of engagement?
- (RQ6) 6. What resources, supports, expertise and other factors would make the biggest difference in increasing parent involvement?
- (RQ6) 7. What are some of the parental engagement activities at this school that you believe are successful? Why are they successful?
- (RQ7) 8. How would parental engagement activities affect students' attendance at this school?
- (RQ10) 9. How does parental engagement affect students' academic achievement?
- (RQ11) 10. How effective is the use of the Parent Center in increasing parental engagement?

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