WELCOME THEM AND THEY WILL COME: A CASE STUDY ON INCREASING CLD

PARENT INVOLVEMENT AT A HIGH ACHIEVING, PREDOMINANTLY MIDDLE

CLASS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

by

KAREN ELIZABETH CASANOVA

(Under the Direction of Sheneka Williams)

ABSTRACT

This study examined parent involvement through the context of increasing the involvement of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) parents in a high achieving, ethnically diverse, and predominantly middle class elementary school. Baseline data analyses showed that the demographics of the most active parents in the school did not reflect the overall student demographics of the school. This study used Bourdieu's (1967) Theory of Cultural Capital and Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez's (1992) idea of Funds of Knowledge, as a theoretical framework to investigate the following questions: (1) In which ways do cultural and linguistic diversity affect how parents define parental involvement? How does that definition affect the way parents engage with the school? and (2) What is learned about alleviating barriers to CLD parent involvement through the action research process?

This case study incorporated the action research process to implement, evaluate, and reflect upon an intervention plan. Findings showed that varying cultural experiences and values regarding education influenced parents' understanding of involvement. In addition, the study

also found that, in order to increase CLD parent engagement, schools should strive to be accommodating, without being insulting or condescending.

Implications from this study suggest that schools should examine the needs of their local communities and solicit the input and opinions of the affected groups before implementing interventions that may not address the community's needs. Implications for future research suggest a need for more studies on how socioeconomics shape the manner in which CLD parents engage with schools like Cedar Cove Elementary School.

INDEX WORDS: CLD parent involvement, parent engagement, cultural capital, funds of knowledge

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DEDICATION

To

Ricky Casanova, my wonderful husband

Thank you for being my biggest fan. Your support, encouragement, and vision of what I "could

be" have kept me grounded throughout this journey.

and

Gabriela and Giancarlo Casanova, my amazing children

You are my inspiration. You make me want to be a better mother every day, and you are both

the reason that the thought of giving up on this work was never acceptable to me.

and

Norbert, Mayi, and Christy Oses, my incredible family

Thank you for instilling in me a love for learning and a passion for education. Most importantly,

thank you for shaping and encouraging my love of God, family, and humanity.

and

Kelly Walter and Sharon Reddick, my friends for life

For talking me down from the ledge on multiple occasions, but more importantly, for teaching

me to be a leader who always searches for innovative ways to do what is best for students.

and

Guillermo Casanova, my father-in-law

Guillermo, you dreamed of college for your children. This is for you. I hope you know your love

of education will not be lost. It will be shared with your grandchildren and beyond.

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I would like to personally thank all of the individuals who helped me along this journey. This work belongs to each of you, as you have all helped shape its existence. Thank you to all of the members of my dissertation committee for your support and guidance throughout this process: Dr. Sheneka Williams, Dr. Karen Bryant, and Dr. Elizabeth Debray. Your comments and words of wisdom have helped me become a more reflective researcher.

I must also thank my fellow members of Cohort 2 in the Educational Leadership program at the University of Georgia. We have laughed and cried together. We have shared our ideas and our perspectives. Most importantly, we have grown as researchers and leaders. I value the relationships we have developed, and I am truly honored to be a part of such a passionate group of educators.

In addition, I want to thank each of the members of my action research team for their contributions to this study. In addition, I must also thank my wonderful principal for her support and encouragement of this work. Without your commitment to this endeavor, this study would not have been possible.

Last but not least, words cannot possibly express my gratitude to my family for all they have done to make this possible. Thank you for driving carpool, babysitting, cooking dinner, and proofreading my papers. Ricky, I love you so very much. You have been my strength throughout this experience. Gabriela and Giancarlo, I hope that my journey will help you to one day understand the power of knowledge and the importance of discipline. Please don't settle for the easy road. The right road, more often than not, is much more difficult to follow.

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Context

Diversity is a term that can generate complex discussions as it relates to public education in the United States. Most often, the discussions attempt to formulate solutions on how to overcome the challenges associated with diversity in order to improve student achievement. Diversity, in these cases, is usually defined in terms of race, ethnicity, or culture. However, in order to understand diversity in the context of education, one must also include influences such as class or socioeconomic background, gender, age, religious beliefs, sexual orientation and ability in one's definition as these factors also contribute to the way in which individuals and groups identify themselves (Dantley & Tillman, 2010; Matuszny, Banda, & Coleman 2007; Shields & Sayani, 2005).

Cedar Cove Elementary School[1] is a diverse, urban elementary school that serves a predominantly middle class socioeconomic population. Its student population has shifted over the last few years from majority 58% White in 2005 to only 43% White in 2015. In addition, there has also been an increase in the number of economically vulnerable students who qualify for free or reduced lunch over the last ten years as well. In 2005, these students made up only 13% of the population. The percentage increased from 13% in 2005 to 34% in 2015 as noted in Figure 1 below (Georgiaeducation.org; Cedar Cove ES student registration system). For the

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[1] Names of school, district, and study participants used in this study are pseudonyms.

2016 school year, the district underwent the re-districting process, which assigned approximately an additional 300 students from neighboring schools to Cedar Cove ES. This did not result in a large shift in demographics. In fact, the only change was a 2% increase in Black students and a 2% decrease in White students. However, there was a slight increase in the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch as noted in Figure 2 below. That percentage increased from 34% in 2015 to 38% in 2016. It is also noteworthy to add that the teaching population of Cedar Cove remains 92% White. The disparity between demographics of students and teachers at Cedar Cove is consistent with the national trends which reflect 14% or less of all educators represent culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds. Despite the overwhelmingly White teaching populations, projections state that by 2020, 50% of the students in public schools will represent diverse, nonwhite backgrounds (Matuszny et al., 2007).

Cedar Cove ES Demographic Trends

	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Multiracial	Native American	White	Free/Reduced Lunch
2015	16.5%	20%	14%	6%	0.5%	43%	34%
2010	17%	17%	8%	6%	1%	51%	24%
2005	18%	13%	5%	5%	0%	58%	13%
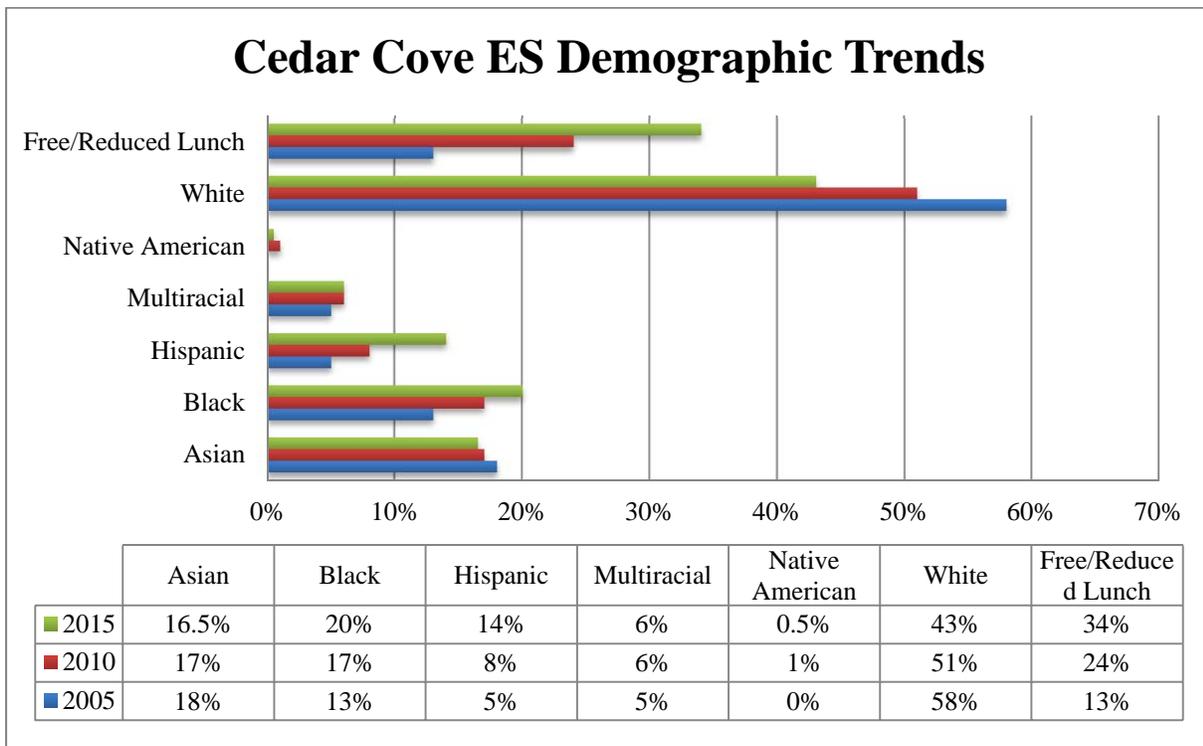
Figure 1: Cedar Cove ES Demographic Trends

CCES Demographic Trends 2015 - 2016

	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Multiracial	Native American	White	Free/Reduced Lunch
2016	16.90%	22.50%	14.20%	5.50%	0.40%	40.50%	38%
2015	16.5%	20%	14%	6%	0.5%	43%	34%
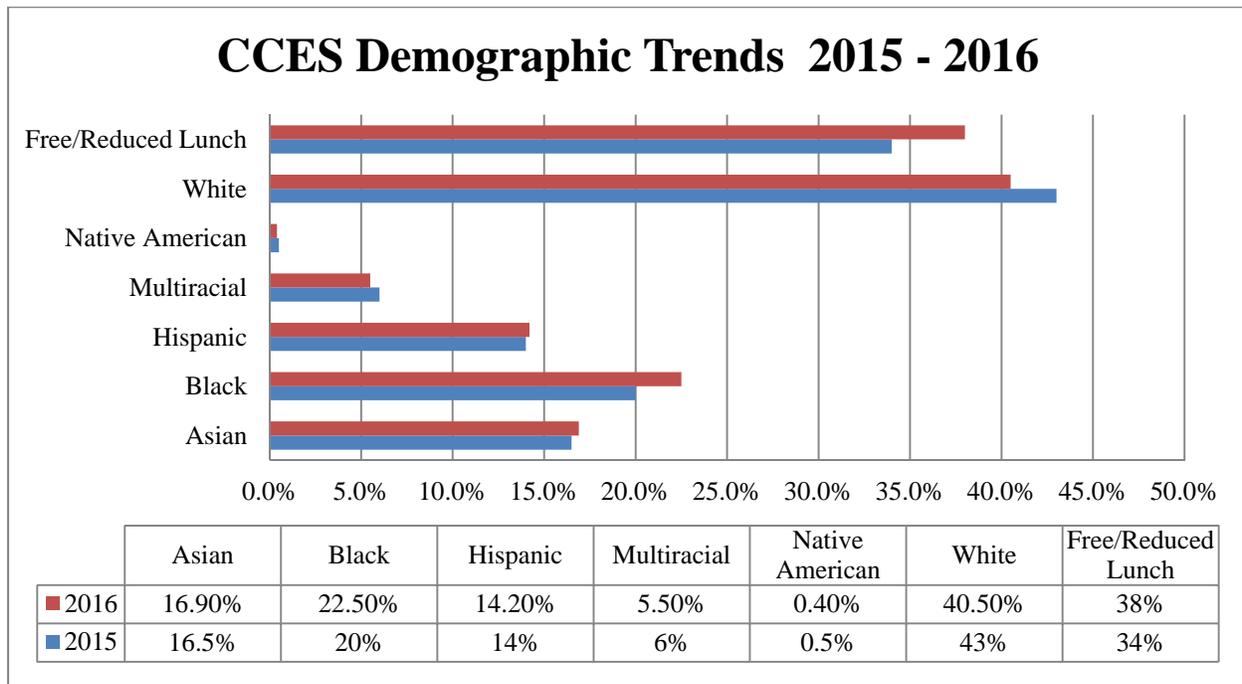
Figure 2: Cedar Cove ES Demographic Trends from 2015-2016

Although the exact reason for the shift in student population is unclear, there have been some social factors that could account for such changes. There was an economic and housing recession that began between 2007 and 2008. Many homes went into foreclosure, real estate prices crashed, and unemployment levels increased. The housing recession could explain, at least in part, the increased number of economically vulnerable students at the school. Cedar Cove Elementary School is located in Grant County. Grant County overall, has experienced demographic changes resulting in an increase of diverse populations as well.   In addition, Cedar Cove ES is located at the south end of the county and borders another district. This neighboring district serves a high percentage of students of color, and the school system there has suffered from instability with superintendents and district leaders that have been accused and even convicted of criminal acts of corruption. It is possible that some of these parents sought a more stable education for their children by moving close by to Grant County.

Despite the shifts in demographics and socioeconomics, the school's minority students continue to perform at high academic levels. The school consistently ranks among the top 15 elementary schools in the district out of 78 in overall academic performance according to district evaluations. Cedar Cove also benefits from a very active Parent Teacher Association (PTA) which provides many volunteers and a variety of programs that support the students. An example of such benefits includes room parents that coordinate a myriad of school events like Field Day, book club, fine arts programs, and International Night.

Situation of Problem

Cedar Cove finds itself in a very active and involved school community. At the start of this study, about 65% of the families and over 80% of the staff were active members of the PTA. However, review of the 2015-2016 PTA membership list showed that 55% of the members represented the school's White students. In addition, there were 32 active committees on the PTA, and 35 individuals were involved in leading those committees. A few of the leaders also help lead more than one committee. In 2015, there were only 3 Black committee leaders and 2 Asian committee leaders. That means 86% of our most active PTA members and volunteers were, again, representing our White student population (Figure 2). This PTA data raised questions that needed to be investigated. First, why are our culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) parents not more actively involved at Cedar Cove Elementary School? Secondly, how do we encourage the remaining 35% of our families who are not current members of our PTA to become more involved so that our levels of parental involvement are more reflective of our overall student population?

2015 CCES PTA Membership and Committee Chair Demographics
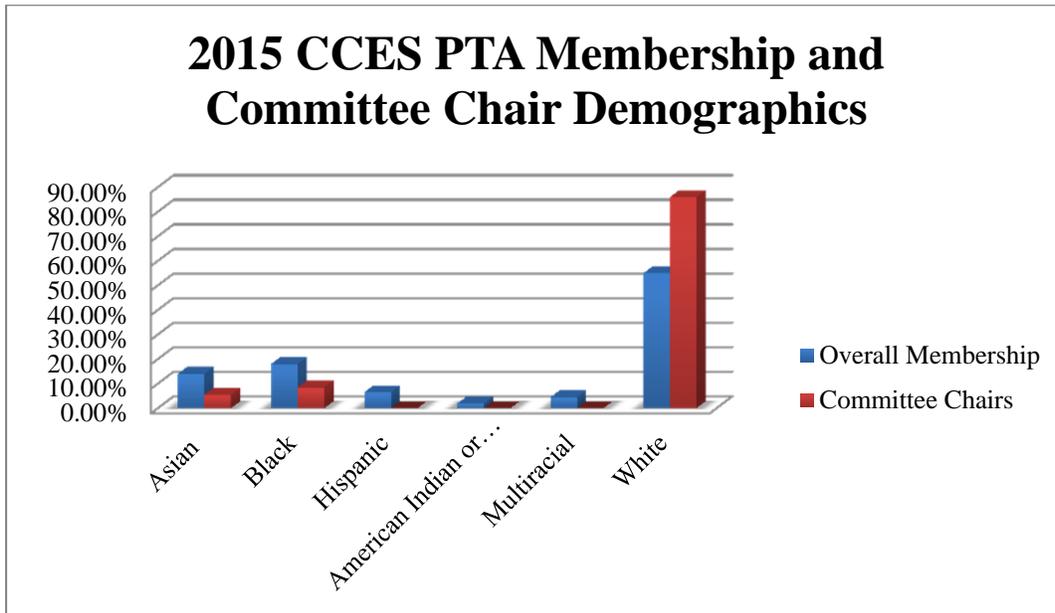
Figure 3: 2015 CCES PTA Membership and Committee Chair Demographics

In addition to parent data from PTA membership, Cedar Cove's parent perception survey data showed the need for improvement in areas such as communication and responsiveness. The survey questions related to these topics are directly correlated to issues of diversity. In addition, these results only stem from a small percentage of parents who actually completed the survey. The concern over communication and the minimal number of parents willing to provide feedback reflects the need to increase the engagement of the school's culturally and linguistically diverse parents, so they can become fully involved in the school community.

Identifying the Problem

Cedar Cove's PTA has over 30 active committees that work to engage our school families. One of these is the Diversity Committee which is responsible for the coordination of the school's International Night. It is a celebration of the diverse identity of the school where parents share food, crafts, practices, and information from their cultures. The event is hosted and coordinated completely by parents and families from the school. However, last year, it was

brought to the attention of the school administration that despite the advertising in the weekly

parent communication of the school for several weeks, it was difficult to find parent volunteers

for this event. This was surprising considering the number of PTA members at the school. When

examining the list of PTA members, it was discovered that the majority of these members

represented our White student population. Therefore, this created a hardship in engaging our

culturally and linguistically diverse parent base for this event. This led to the question if, as a

school, steps should be taken to ensure the engagement of this integral part of the school

community.

Furthermore, each year, Grant County Public Schools provides parents with the

opportunity to give feedback to their children's specific schools by completing a parent

perception survey. In the parent survey results for Cedar Cove ES for the 2014-2015 school

year, parent scores were very positive overall, and the school scored above the county average

for almost all questions on the survey. However, there were questions relating to the areas of

parent communication and responsiveness where parents did not agree to the extent that they did

in other areas.

In a school that currently has a majority culturally diverse population, it is important to

examine the manner in which the school is communicating with and involving these

stakeholders. Could it be that as a school, we have not clearly communicated our expectations to

parents, especially those who are culturally and linguistically diverse? Is the school utilizing the

advantages of Funds of Knowledge to bridge the connections between home and school? Moll,

Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) explained that Funds of Knowledge embraces the unique sets

of knowledge possessed by diverse families. This action research study investigated this issue in

hopes that the school's actions regarding parent communication and responsiveness would

improve in order to promote the engagement of CLD parents and better support the community (Figure 3). The school's behaviors should model and reflect the behaviors that the students will need to emulate in the future as they interact more and more in a global society.
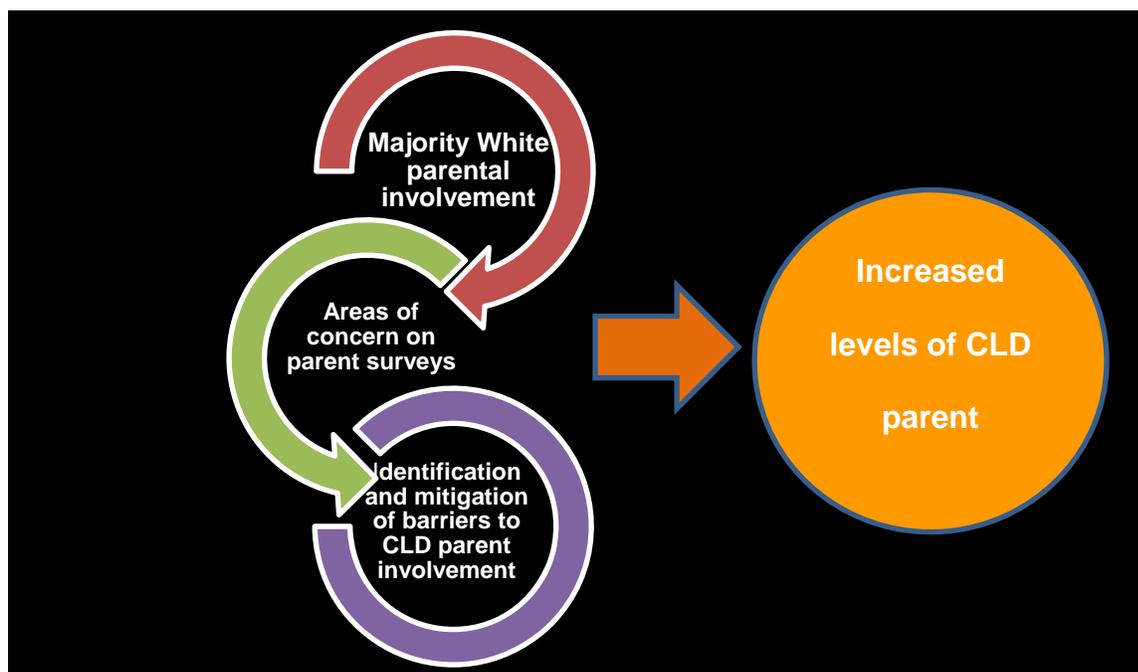
Figure 4: Research Problem.

Purpose

This action research study seeks to improve the current levels of culturally and linguistically diverse parent involvement at Cedar Cove Elementary School by developing a framework to promote the varying types of involvement both at school and at home. According to Araujo (2009), "The array of ethnicities and nationalities that make up the meta-group of linguistically diverse families is complex, is multilayered, and continues to increase" (p. 117). In addition, there is a need to create a common understanding of what defines parental involvement. Many educators believe that parent involvement, especially with culturally and linguistically diverse populations is evident by parents receiving training in order to work with

their children at home. However, research supports that for many CLD parents, involvement

signifies instilling values, communicating with their children, and providing for their basic needs

(Araujo 2009). This information guides the action research at Cedar Cove.

Inquiry

      Purpose and research questions. As previously stated, the purpose of this action

research (AR) study is to improve the current levels of culturally and linguistically diverse

(CLD) parent involvement at Cedar Cove ES by developing a framework to promote varying

levels of involvement both at school and at home. It is clear that although the school's student

demographics reflected a majority population of students of color, the majority of parents overtly

involved at the school level are White. In fact, in 2016, although only 41% of the student body is

White, 56% of overall parental PTA membership is from White families and over 61% of the

PTA committee chairpersons are White. I use the action research process as the basis for my

research in order to engage a process of inquiry that can be replicated and continued as needed in

order to effect change.

    The research questions which guide the inquiry are:

1. In which ways do cultural and linguistic diversity affect how parents define parental
   involvement? How does that definition affect the way parents engage with the school?

2. What is learned about alleviating barriers to CLD parent involvement through the action
   research process?

The action research team hopes to increase the level of culturally and linguistically diverse

parent involvement in order to increase communication with families, which would in turn,

improve parent perceptions of the school. As the researcher, I anticipate the need to learn about

the school's methods of communication in order to identify and then mitigate barriers to CLD

parents' understanding. This study serves as an addition to the much needed literature surrounding how high achieving, predominantly middle class schools with diverse populations can improve their school-family relationships.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of the literature which developed and supports the framework for this study. It includes supporting literature from books, empirical studies, journals, and articles. The literature on parent involvement is extensive, therefore, after more general information on parent involvement was reviewed, the search for relevant literature was focused on parent involvement with culturally and linguistically diverse families in high achieving schools.

Conceptual Framework

This action research case study examines how to improve the level of parental involvement of culturally and linguistically diverse parents in a high achieving, diverse, predominantly middle class, urban elementary school. The literature supports the many benefits of parental involvement (Araujo 2009; Bang, 2009; Barrera & Warner, 2006, Chavkin, 2005; Colombo 2006; DeCastro-Ambrosetti & Cho, 2005; Epstein & Jansorn, 2004; Georgis, Gokiert, Ford, & Ali, 2014; LaRocque, 2013; Nelson & Guerra, 2010; Nelson & Guerra 2014). There is also a portion of the literature that warns of the negative impact that parental involvement of middle class parents can have on both their children and other students when their motives for involvement are solely individualistic (Cucchiara & Horvat, 2009; Lareau 2000; Lareau & Shumar 1996; Levine-Rasky, 2009). In addition, Lareau (2000) warns of the negative impact parent involvement can have on family relationships in some cases due to the stress placed on the students. However, these negative impacts were found to be true in limited cases, and the vast

majority of studies do support the positive outcomes related to parents' involvement in their children's schooling. The purpose of this study is to improve the levels of parental involvement among CLD parents and develop a framework to increase the levels of both involvement at school and at home for this high achieving, urban elementary school.

Using Bourdieu's Theory of Cultural Capital and Moll et al.'s Theory of Funds of Knowledge as a guiding theoretical framework for this study, I hope to clarify the school's expectations of parental involvement for all parents. I will base this effort on the understanding that CLD parents may have varying levels of cultural and social capital with which to navigate and access the school. According to Whitaker and Hoover-Dempsey (2013), cultural capital is shared beliefs and behaviors that impact social and cultural acceptance of exclusion. Furthermore:

> Social capital focuses on the benefits accruing to individuals by virtue of participation in groups, and on the deliberate construction of sociability for the purpose of creating this resource. It also included the material (e.g. books, computers) and immaterial (e.g. people) educationally relevant resources that individuals and families are able to access through their social ties. (p. 92)

My hope is to increase CLD parent involvement in order to better support their students both at school and at home.

Conceptual Framework
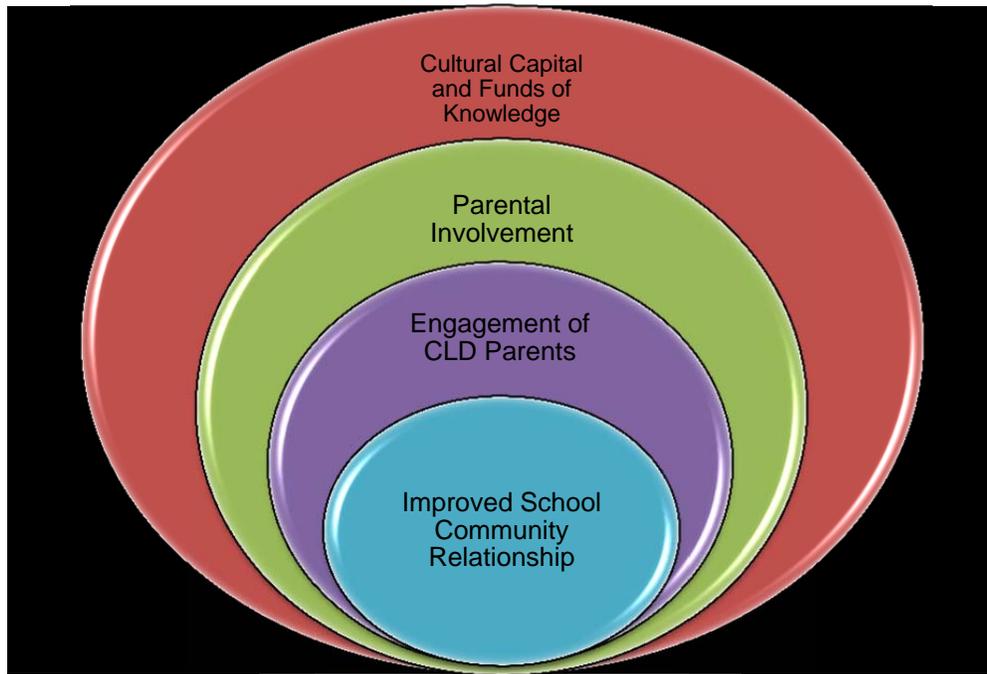
Figure 5: Conceptual Framework.

Connection to Literature

Theory

 The theories informing this study are Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Cultural Capital and

Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez's Funds of Knowledge.   These theories propose that

understanding and placing value on a family's diversity and experiences can enhance the

relationships between families and schools. They help to explain the differences in perspectives

about parent involvement as well as how existing differences can be viewed as enhancements to

learning as opposed to deficits.

 Bourdieu's theory posits that individuals hold certain cultural resources based on their

experiences, and those resources then provide certain social advantages that allow inclusion in or

exclusion from high status positions (as cited in Lareau, 2000, p. 176-177). According to

Bourdieu (1967):

> Those whose 'culture' (in the ethnologists' sense) is the academic culture conveyed by
>
> the school, have a system of categories of perception, language, thought and appreciation
>
> that sets them apart from those whose only training has been through their work and their
>
> social contacts with people of their own kind. (p. 352)

Part of Bourdieu's view supports that individuals gain capital from their social relationships and

networks that must be maintained in order to keep that social status (Lee & Bowen 2006).

According to Lareau (2000), "while individuals possess capital, they must 'invest' these class

resources to yield social profits" (p. 177). This implies that in order for individuals to benefit

from their cultural capital, they must use their resources to create advantages based on the

situation. Schools, as an institution, generally operate from a middle class value perspective. It

then stands to reason that White, middle class students and families will understand how to

navigate and benefit from their resources to maximize educational opportunities. Bourdieu

supports this by noting that one way inequalities are made evident is when an individual's social

and cultural capital do not coincide with that of the institution or organization (Lee & Bowen

2006). Unfortunately, all this also implies that culturally and linguistically diverse parents, who

many times can also be working class and lower class parents, could possibly be at a distinct

disadvantage for successfully engaging in and offering parental support for their students both at

school and at home.

Yosso (2005) offers a different perspective that should also be considered. She noted that

Bourdieu's theory argues that somehow minority groups (those who differ either racially,

ethnically, or economically) from the dominant culture lack the social and cultural capital needed

to find social mobility. Yosso (2005) challenges this idea by stating that these groups possess community cultural wealth. Her research is framed by the rejection that our society should validate the dominance of White society and instead, center it's ideology around the experiences of People of Color. Therefore, this study also finds a theoretical framework within Moll et al.'s (1992) Funds of Knowledge theory. Funds of Knowledge, "can have many benefits for those who teach and learn with children whose cultural capital is not from a White middle-class perspective" (Araujo, 2009, p. 118). This theory supports that the knowledge students bring from home can be valuable assets to the school community. Using these cultural resources forges partnerships between schools and families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Araujo, 2009). According to Moll et al. (1992), Funds of Knowledge challenges mainstream educational perceptions that working class families are somehow socially disorganized and intellectually deficient by promoting a view of these households as having, "ample cultural and cognitive resources with great potential utility for classroom instruction" (p. 134).

Parent Involvement

LaRocque (2013) contends that schools need the support of community and family in order to educate every child. "This collaboration can ease the cultural dissonance that arises between a student population that is becoming increasingly diverse (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001) and teachers who remain predominantly White and middle class (Nieto, 2002)" (LaRocque, 2013, p. 112). This idea is confirmed by Colombo (2006) who stated that positive school and family relationships are instrumental in creating successful environments for students. Nelson and Guerra (2010) further argue that parents must not only be involved, but must also be empowered. They also propose that when parents are empowered, they are not responding to the

needs of the school, rather they are working as school partners to improve the school and community.

Definition of parent involvement. Park and Holloway (2013) define parent involvement as, "parent's interactions with children and schools that are intended to promote academic achievement" (p. 106). There is much research supporting parent involvement and its positive effect on a student's overall education (Bang, 2009; Barrera & Warner, 2006; Chavkin, 2005; DeCastro-Ambrosetti & Cho, 2005; Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman, 2007; LaRocque, 2013; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Nelson & Guerra, 2010; Whitaker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2013). However, it is essential that educators broaden their ideas of what parent involvement or participation should encompass. LaRocque (2013) claimed, "Understanding the challenges that affect families allows educators to strategize about methods to facilitate varied participation by families and create meaningful opportunities for home–school partnerships" (p. 116). Barrera and Warner (2006) also note that effective parental involvement programs will establish a climate of trust that helps meet the needs of both the school and the community.

Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn, and Van Voorhis (2002) outline a framework to help facilitate the process of building the school-parent relationship. These researchers present six types of involvement that help to categorize ways in which these relationships can grow and provide concrete strategies for application in practice to help develop and strengthen these areas in order to benefit both families and the school. According to Epstein and Jansorn (2004), there are 6 types of parent involvement that should encompass educators' overall understanding of this concept: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. These skills can serve as a framework to help schools develop plans to enhance the relationship between home and school. Lee and

Bowen (2006) described parent involvement to "include attending parent-teacher conferences, attending programs featuring students, and engaging in volunteer activities. Parent educational involvement at home may include providing help with homework, discussing the child's schoolwork and experiences at school, and structuring home activities" (p. 194). The literature also refers to the term parent engagement when describing parental involvement. According to Georgis, Gokiert, Ford, and Ali (2014):

> Parental engagement is often described in terms of involvement in school-based activities (e.g., parent-teacher conferences, committee service, volunteerism) and home-based activities (e.g., homework support). To the extent that parents perform these activities, they are considered by the school to be engaged. (p. 23)

In the context of this study, I use both of the terms parental involvement and parental engagement interchangeably to describe the behaviors and actions of parents in supporting their child's educational experience.

Deficit Perceptions

There is literature that examines educators' beliefs and perceptions about diverse students, their families, and how it impacts education (Marx, 2008; Nelson & Guerra, 2014; DeCastro-Ambrosetti & Cho, 2005; Yosso (2005). Yosso (2005) claimed, "Indeed, one of the most prevalent forms of contemporary racism in US Schools is deficit thinking" (p. 75). Some studies have focused on pre-service teachers that are still enrolled in preparation programs, while others have studied both pre-service and practicing teachers and leaders.

Nelson and Guerra (2014) conducted a study in order to identify the beliefs that current teachers and leaders hold about culturally diverse students and their families, to assess their cultural knowledge, and to examine how this is applied in practice. They conducted a qualitative

study with leaders and teachers in urban districts with changing demographics in two states. Their findings showed that out of over 100 educators, less than 1% was found to be culturally responsive. The majority of participants demonstrated a general awareness of culture, yet a majority of them held deficit beliefs about diverse students and their families. Teachers appeared to have more cultural knowledge than leaders, but held more deficit beliefs than leaders. Due to this, educators attempt to close the achievement gap among minority students using pedagogy without considering the need to provide an equitable, culturally responsive learning environment (Nelson & Guerra, 2014).

Similarly, DeCastro-Ambrosetti and Cho (2005) examined the perceptions of secondary pre-service and practicing teachers about diverse groups of students and the values that the parents of those diverse groups place on education. For this study, the participants were 160 secondary preservice and inservice teachers enrolled in education classes. Two of them were multicultural classes and the other three had family involvement and cultural diversity issues in the curriculum. The participants completed an anonymous attitudinal survey that had 17 demographic questions and 20 questions related to multiculturalism on a 5 point Likert-type scale. There were also additional open ended, self- reflection questions that were coded and categorized using a qualitative analysis procedure. Although the results of this study did reveal that majority of participants felt their attitudes were positively influenced as a result of the information in the courses due to increased awareness and appreciation of other cultures, many of the participants also felt ill-equipped to handle the teaching of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students. In addition, many participants also held negative attitudes towards the parents of these cultural groups and the value placed on education. They blamed the parents for the low achievement of the students. DeCastro-Ambrosetti and Cho (2005) recognized that these

attitudes and assumptions lead to the breakdown in communication that can cause a rift in the home-school relationship. Epstein (2013) posed similar findings of preservice teachers and the fact that they hold unfounded stereotypes of traditionally marginalized groups as truths. Epstein (2013) further stated that these teachers dismiss the parents of low income, linguistically diverse, and others as unimportant influences in their children's' lives. Researchers agree that respect and trust must be present in order to promote a positive home and school relationship (Bang, 2009; Barrera & Warner 2006; DeCastro-Ambrosetti & Cho, 2005; Nelson & Guerra, 2010).

Educator's beliefs and perceptions can certainly impact the experiences of students in school. Indeed, students hold their own perceptions and beliefs as well which can extend to the perception of the students' families. Those perceptions are the ones that must allow a student to feel valued and respected in order to maximize the educational experience. Sherry Marx (2008) conducted a study to examine the school environment of a majority white school in a western state through the perspectives of Latino students, white students, and teachers and administrators. Marx employed ethnographic and survey research methods. Surveys were given to students, faculty, and administrators. Also, qualitative observations and interviews of the one Latino teacher were conducted as well. The study revealed that the Latino students felt less welcomed than white students at the school and liked their teachers and school less. All of the teachers, except for the one Latino teacher, were consistent in their belief Latinos needed to assimilate into the majority culture. Marx (2008) concluded that Latino students had a general dissatisfaction with their school, a lack of connection with the faculty, and that the school had a lack of outreach to connect to the home culture of their students. The survey results also suggested that white teachers contributed to this feeling of disenfranchisement through their expressed beliefs (Marx,

2008). These findings support the ideas of cultural capital where the capital held by the non-dominant group may not be valued or may even be deliberately excluded.

Barriers to Parent Involvement

These deficit perceptions can lead to barriers for communication between schools and CLD families. Araujo (2009) noted that communication barriers with these families often occur because of stereotypes, assumptions and generalizations. In addition, schools tend to undervalue these families. Schools must take into consideration that many times, these families need information about the educational system because they are not familiar with it. Also, this helps to communicate expectations on behalf of the school for parents who may not want to interfere with the school's role. Araujo (2009) explained that some parents from other countries trust the school implicitly. They feel that questioning or involvement of any kind could be seen as challenging the teacher's authority or professionalism (Araujo, 2009; Colombo, 2006). Without clear communication, this could then be interpreted by the school as a lack of concern or involvement on the part of the parents.

Cheatham and Santos (2011) explained how the concepts of time and communication can be heavily influenced by cultural beliefs. The authors explain that teachers should strive to build personal relationships with the families of the students individually in order to understand how the family's concept of time and communication may differ from their own. This should prompt careful reflection and consideration on the part of the teacher as to how to manage face to face encounters as well as other forms of communication (Cheatham & Santos, 2011). Whitaker and Hoover-Dempsey (2013) extended this thought by noting that the manner in which schools extend invitations for involvement to parents can impact the beliefs parents hold about their roles and the definition of involvement.

In addition to the above mentioned cultural barriers, another obstacle for many CLD parents is the language barrier. Insecurity with the host language makes parents feel disempowered and less likely to become involved (Colombo, 2006; Denessen, Bakker, & Gierveld, 2007; Georgis, Gokiert, Ford, & Ali, 2014; Matuszny, Banda, & Coleman 2007; Park & Holloway, 2013). Other barriers also include a lack of understanding of the educational system and how to navigate it as well as other logistical barriers like transportation or work hours, etc. (Colombo, 2006; Denessen, Bakker, & Gierveld, 2007; Georgis, Gokiert, Ford, & Ali, 2014). According to Georgis, Ford, and Ali (2014), parents also face practical settlement issues such as urgent health needs that may prevent parents from being as involved as they would like. Once these barriers are lifted and parents are given the opportunity to practice engagement within their own social and cultural spaces, they are more likely to be involved with the school. These researchers argue that one way to move the parent engagement dialogue forward is to acknowledge the needs of the parents and allow their daily realities, experiences, and capital define the very nature of their school engagement (Georgis, Ford, & Ali, 2014).

Parents' Role Beliefs

Some research investigates how parents' perceptions of their role within their child's education influence their form and level of parental involvement. Some literature attributes lack of parental involvement to the parents' personal, negative, educational experiences. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2004), Lopez (2001), and Jackson and Remillard (2005) all contend that parents, sometimes perceived by schools as uninvolved, support their students' education in a variety of ways despite their lack of education or negative personal experiences with their own education.

Lee and Bowen (2006) conducted a study which found strong correlations to parental involvement based on socioeconomics, demographics, and parental level of education. This study found that all parents were willing and able to make time to support their children's education at home, but the emphasis of their efforts may have differed on the basis of their own, personal experiences. Park and Holloway (2013) had similar findings regarding parental involvement. Their study found that parents of higher socioeconomic levels had more involvement at the school level while lower socioeconomic levels of parents supported students more in the home. These findings support the idea that based on experiences, parents' perceptions of their role may vary.

Whittaker and Hoover-Dempsey (2013) argued that levels of parent engagement are also linked to parental role construction, or parents' beliefs about what they are supposed to do regarding their child's education. Understanding other literature supports the idea that parents' conceptions of their roles may vary across different economic and cultural groups, these researchers conducted a study to examine the links among parental role construction for involvement and varied forms of school and student invitations to involvement. They sought to understand how parents' beliefs about their roles are shaped by prior experiences with schools, and how those beliefs are influenced currently by the invitations to involvement on the part of the school (Whitaker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2013). Their findings outlined three key areas that impacted role beliefs: the school's climate, the parents' perceptions of school expectations of involvement, and student invitations to involvement. Results from this study suggested that the actions of schools to engage parents work to positively influence parental beliefs about their role in supporting their child's learning. Also, it was found that parents' current experiences with

schools were more powerful than their prior school experiences in predicting their role beliefs (Whitaker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2013).

Socioeconomics and Cultural Diversity

Some literature has suggested that the higher parents' income and educational levels, the more likely they are to become involved with their child's school. Conversely, lower income and educational levels also contribute to lower levels of parental involvement (Cucchiara & Horvat, 2009; Park & Holloway, 2013; Whitaker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2013). There have been studies to examine the levels of parent involvement from both middle class parents and those of lower income status (Cucchiara & Horvat, 2009; Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003; Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman, 2007; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Levine-Rasky, 2009; Park & Holloway, 2013). In their study, Cucchiara and Horvat (2009) noted that middle class families bring resources to schools and can be catalysts for change. However, if the purpose of their involvement is solely to benefit their individual child, then their involvement could harm and alienate lower and working class families. This study took place in two urban schools in the downtown area of a large, Northeastern city. The researchers used interviews and observations to complete 2 case studies. Results of the study supported that middle class parents were rich in social and cultural capital used to influence decision making and resources. The benefit for all students in the school (when parents held a collective view of involvement) or merely the select middle class children (when parents held an individualistic view of involvement) depended on the goals and intentions of the parents with their involvement in the school (Cucchiara & Horvat, 2009).

Levine-Rasky (2009) also conducted a similar study to investigate how middle-class parents exercise influence and form positive relationships at a neighborhood public school that

serves various ethno-cultural groups of students. The sample used in this study was mostly mothers from the school who represented the socially dominant, Jewish, and economically advantaged population. Through the use of qualitative personal interviews, the researcher found support of Bourdieu's concept of habitus and social capital by these mothers which explains how members of a particular class share dispositions, schools of thought, and resources (Bourdieu, 1967; Levine-Rasky 2009). Levine-Rasky (2009) noted the majority of these parents built effective relationships with each other and the school that exemplified their social influence and power. These relationships also simultaneously supported exclusionary practices of the minority parents that were composed of a large, immigrant population.

Horvat, Weininger, and Lareau (2003) conducted a study which examined an integral domain of social capital: parental networks. Their work examined how the composition and use of parental networks varies by social class. This qualitative study used interviews and observations of the families of third and fourth graders from three schools in both a Midwestern university community and a large, Northeastern city. Results from the study showed that middle class families created social ties and networks through the organized activities of their children such as sports and dance classes as well as through informal contacts with educators and other professionals. Conversely, social networks for working-class and poor families were centered on family groups as opposed to peer groups or professionals. Conclusions from the study noted that middle class families tended to pool together to convey their message on the school and collectively bring about change. However, working-class and poor parents dealt with issues individually on a case by case basis. The study also found that race did not influence social networks or the manner in which families handled problems in school as much as social class (Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003).

Diamond and Gomez (2004) addressed how race and social class influence parental participation in their children's education. Their study examined how social class forms the educational orientations, specifically, of working and middle-class African American parents. The study involved Chicago public school parents who were identified as actively involved in their children's schools as school volunteers and decision-making team members. Results from the study showed that social class played a role in how involved parents became in choosing schools for their children. Middle-class African American parents were more active in the school choice process than their working-class counterparts. Working-class parents wanted high quality education for their children as well, but did not have the resources to pursue customized educational options. Findings from this study also showed that both working and middle-class parents were involved at the school level in a variety of capacities (Diamond & Gomez, 2004).

Park and Holloway, (2013) sought to identify factors that promote parental involvement in their adolescent children's education across a variety of racial/ethnic and sociodemographic groups. Their study examined the responses of over 3,000 high school parents or guardians on a questionnaire which addressed the topics of parental motivational beliefs, parental involvement, and parent demographics. The study noted that at the high school level, an additional indicator of parental involvement that arises is parents' college expectations and financial planning. This study found that the more support given at home, the less likely it was for those parents to engage in college planning. In addition, race was not found to be a factor for involvement at the school level when household income and mother's educational level was taken into account. Overall, this study found that parents from higher SES backgrounds were more likely to be involved at school and in expectations and college planning than lower SES parents. Black

parents and lower SES parents were more involved with homework than White parents and higher SES parents (Park & Holloway, 2013).

Student achievement. There is an abundance of literature examining the correlation between socioeconomics, parent involvement, and student achievement. Lee and Bowen (2006) conducted a study of 415 third through fifth graders in a community bordering a major urban center in the Southeastern United States. The purpose of their study was to study the level and impact of parental involvement on elementary school children's academic achievement by race/ethnicity, poverty, and parent educational attainment. They found that levels of parental involvement and child achievement varied significantly across demographic groups. In addition, students with higher socioeconomics and higher levels of parental educational attainment outscored students who did not. The same high level of educational expectations in economically vulnerable and nonvulnerable families was associated with lower achievement among school lunch program participants than among nonparticipants. This could reflect lower levels of human, cultural, and social capital in lower income homes (Lee & Bowen, 2006).

Ingram, Wolfe, and Lieberman (2007) conducted a study of parent involvement at 3 high achieving schools in Illinois that were serving populations of diverse and economically disadvantaged students. The researchers were using Epstein's six areas of parent involvement to serve as the framework for their study. The results of the study were consistent with research supporting that there are some areas of parent involvement more closely linked to student achievement than others (Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman, 2007). Although two of the six typologies from Epstein's model (Parenting and Learning at Home) were very apparent in these schools, the other four typologies (Communicating, Volunteering, Decision Making, and Collaborating with the Community) did not seem to be in operation or linked to students'

academic success. Therefore, the results of this study also supported research that suggests that how parents interact with children at home has a greater effect on the child's performance in school than how parents interact with their children at school (Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman, 2007).

In 2001, Lopez conducted a study to illustrate how parent involvement can be shown in ways that fall outside of the traditional school related models. This case study incorporated qualitative research methodology using observations and interviews on a purposeful sample of an immigrant family living in the Texas Rio Grande Valley recommended by school personnel. The study found that for this family, the perception of involvement was to show their children the value of their education through the medium of hard work. In addition, despite the parents' lack of formal involvement in the school, all of their children had great successes in school. Implications from this study suggest that schools need to establish new ways to effectively promote success for all students taking into account the non-traditional views to be involved in children's education.

Other literature also explains the differences in beliefs based on middle or lower class experiences. For example, Lareau and Shumar (1996) explained that understandings of basic terminology could vary drastically depending on the perspective. They used the example of the term "helpful." The researchers noted that working-class parents understand themselves to be helpful by entrusting the responsibility for education to educators, while middle-class parents believe themselves to be helpful by supervising, monitoring, and intervening in their children's schooling (Lareau & Shumar 1996).

Conclusion

There are copious amounts of literature that examine parental involvement in schools. As a foundation for this study, my research focused on four overarching concepts throughout the literature that are interwoven with the purpose and guiding questions of this study. Several studies examined how socioeconomics and cultural elements influence the manner in which parents involve themselves with their children's education (Cucchiara & Horvat, 2009; Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003; Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman, 2007; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Levine-Rasky, 2009). A common insight noted among many of these studies was that involvement is not always beneficial to the school. This is mostly apparent when some parents hold individualistic motives driving their involvement as opposed to a collective approach. Individual motives can have a negative impact on marginalized groups. Additionally, these studies notes that lower socioeconomics limited the number of resources available to parents which in many cases, also limited their ability to navigate the educational system to their advantage.

Whereas a significant portion of the literature concerning increasing levels of CLD parent involvement has been centered around schools with either high poverty and low achievement, or high poverty and high achievement, this action research case study adds a dimension to the literature that addresses how to increase CLD parent involvement in a predominantly middle-class, high achieving elementary school setting. Please refer to *Table 1* below for an overall summary of the empirical literature analysis for this study. Appendix A contains the complete Empirical Table.

Table 1 Empirical Literature Summary.

Theme in Literature	Empirical Studies	Overview
Deficit Perceptions	Marx. S. (2008) Nelson & Guerra (2014) DeCastro-Ambrosetti & Cho (2005)	Many educators hold deficit beliefs about the parents and families of CLD students despite training. This may manifest itself through blaming families for students' lack of achievement, failing to use culturally responsive pedagogy, and dismissing familial influence on students as unimportant.
Parent's Role Beliefs	Jackson & Remillard (2005) Lee & Bowen (2006) Lopez (2001) Park & Holloway (2013) Whitaker & Hoover-Dempsey (2013)	Despite a lack of education or negative experiences with their own education, parents continue to support their children's education. The actions of schools to engage parents can positively influence parental beliefs about their role in supporting their child's learning. Schools must also take into account non-traditional forms of parental involvement when promoting success of all students.
Socioeconomics and Cultural Diversity	Cucchiara & Horvat (2009) Denessen, Bakker, & Gierveld (2007) Diamond and Gomez (2004) Horvat, Weininger, and Lareau (2003) Jackson & Remillard (2005) Lee & Bowen (2006) Levine-Rasky (2009) Park & Holloway (2013)	Overall, most families have support networks in place. The composition and use of parental networks varies by social class. Middle class families created social ties and networks through the organized activities of their children as well as through informal contacts with educators and other professionals, while working-class and poor families are centered on family groups. Middle class families tend to work together to bring resources to schools and can be catalysts for change. However, working-class and poor parents tend to deal with issues individually on a case by case basis.
Socioeconomics and Student Achievement	Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman, (2007) Lee & Bowen (2006) Lopez (2001)	Parents of varying sociodemographic groups are involved with and support their children's education in a variety of ways. This involvement does influence students' achievement. Overall, socioeconomics seemed to have a greater impact on student achievement than did race. This could be attributed to lower levels of human, cultural, and social capital in lower income homes.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This is a mixed method, case study. The boundaries of this case were limited to the local

school setting at Cedar Cove ES during the 2016-2017 school year. It included the data

generated by the action research (AR) team, which was comprised of school staff as well as one,

active PTA parent. The data from these meetings were transcribed and coded. In addition, data

also included the perceptions of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) parents of current

students at the school obtained through surveys and a focus group interview. The survey data

were analyzed using an excel spreadsheet and the focus group interview was recorded,

transcribed, and coded in the same way as the AR team meetings. There were no embedded cases

that developed throughout the research process.

The case focused on the parent – school relationship dynamics of this particular group of

parents. The use of a case study for this research allowed for a deeper understanding of a

specific example within a given topic of study. Simons (2009) describes an instrumental case as

one that helps one understand a broader topic. Because there is limited literature on CLD parent

involvement in a predominantly middle class setting, my hope was that this case would serve as

an instrumental case providing insight and information about CLD parent involvement for the

broader educational field. Replication of these successful local school interventions is

potentially beneficial for other schools.

Action Research Approach

Action research is an inquiry approach to research that focuses on targeting a problem and providing interventions in order to help solve the issue. The purpose of the action research team at Cedar Cove Elementary School was to help increase the levels of parental involvement of our CLD families. This team was a part of a collaborative effort to improve the school-family partnership at Cedar Cove ES.

Action research is the preferred methodology within the case study because it is a fluid and ongoing process that is able to adapt to the changing dynamics of an educational organization. It is not a one-time study that offers advice on certain topics, rather a way to collaboratively bring about change in a variety of areas that may need improvement. Therefore, this process can be replicated over and over as needed for change. Action research benefits the case study model because of its emergent design. The action research process may lead to a shift in the study based on the data collected. According to Simons (2009, p. 31), this is characteristic of case studies that should be taken into account.

In addition, the action research process is iterative. A problem is established and reflected upon, and a plan with interventions for the problem is developed. Next, action is taken to implement the plan and data is recorded during that time. The data is reviewed throughout the implementation and observations are made relating to the data. The cycle then repeats itself as the team then reflects on what has been learned throughout the process, plans again, and adjusts the interventions based on the previous data. New data is then collected and observed and the cycle enters a new phase.
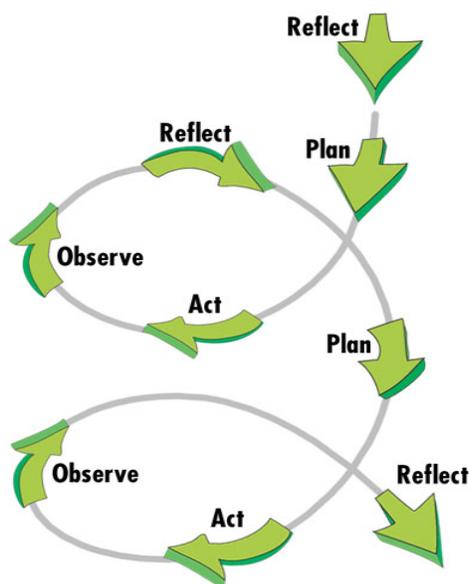
Figure 6: Action Research Cycle.

This action research case study incorporated a mixed methods approach from a Constructivist and Transformative worldview. The Constructivist worldview pulls from social constructivism which states that individuals create meaning through their experiences which are influenced by cultural norms and values (Creswell, 2014). The Transformative worldview contends that activism and change are needed on a political level in order to help groups who have traditionally been marginalized (Creswell, 2014).

This study used Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods, which Creswell (2014) explains occurs when researchers first use the results of quantitative research to then explain in more depth through qualitative research. In this study, I used PTA enrollment data and parent perception survey results (quantitative) to establish the problem, and the action research process established interventions and explained the results further through the collection of qualitative data. The qualitative data collected and used for this purpose included AR team meeting transcriptions, parent surveys, parent focus group interviews, and researcher journal entries. The

parent surveys administered through the work of the AR team as well as an invitation to partake in the parent focus group were made available to all parents of the school.

This action research case study completed two cycles of the research process. In the summer of 2016, the AR team came together and met to reflect on the problem and create a plan. Implementation of the interventions, a parent liaison group and a parent meeting, then began in the late summer and early fall of 2016. As the AR team met to reflect on the implementation, a new cycle of action research began. The team reflected on what was learned, analyzed parent feedback forms from the intervention, gathered data from a focus group interview, and developed a plan for next steps. A second parent meeting intervention was implemented and observed throughout the fall and winter of 2016-2017 to complete the second cycle of action research.

Action research is a collaborative process where the team is responsible for making decisions and contributing rather than one individual directing and giving orders. The AR team met initially every two weeks in the summer of 2016 to reflect on the problem and develop a plan. Once the plan was in place, the AR team met as needed to discuss data and observations. Commitment to this team was crucial to its success, as each member was an invaluable asset to the work being conducted.

Intervention Implementation Plan

Once IRB approval for the study was granted, the AR case study completed two cycles of the research process. In the summer of 2016, the AR team met to reflect on the problem and create a plan. We administered an initial parent survey and analyzed the data from those surveys. The survey was translated into the top five languages spoken in the homes of our currently enrolled students in order to be accessible to our linguistically diverse families. It was

sent out electronically and was also made available to parents on paper at the school. In order maximize the number of parents informed of the study, paper copies of the survey were made available at both registration day and Cedar Cove's Curriculum Night where a large percentage of parents are in attendance. Ultimately, 110 surveys (98 electronic versions and 12 paper/pencil versions) were completed at the beginning of the year.

The AR team discussed several possible interventions for this study. In our meetings, members mentioned the possible translation of teacher newsletters as well as translations of the principal's weekly communication letter called, "Weekly Paws." This idea led to the team discussing how to accomplish this logistically, which then brought up the feasibility of translating these documents effectively and in a timely manner for parents. The cost of this option was also discussed, as without volunteers, translations can be very expensive to acquire. Then, the idea of translations with the help of volunteers could be ineffective if those volunteers weren't fluent in the educational vernacular necessary in both languages.

Another intervention mentioned was the creation of a welcome video which could be posted on the school website or sent to parents via email by classroom teachers. The purpose of the video would be to provide an overview to parents on major events and processes at the school, and then the video could be translated into several languages. Again, this idea was discussed further, and it was decided that perhaps this was something that needed to be done further down the road once more parents, students, and resources were available to help with its production. It was noted as possibly being produced over the summer to have readily available for parents at the beginning of the school year.

The team also discussed the need for overall cultural awareness/responsiveness training for all staff, especially the front office staff. The team agreed on the need to ensure that the staff

is welcoming and supportive without being condescending in assuming that all families are in need of support based on looks, names, or accents.

Although the AR team discussed many possibilities for interventions; ultimately, the AR team decided to implement two interventions which comprised the first cycle of our research. The first intervention was for the school to establish a group of parent liaisons who can serve to increase communication with our CLD parents. We established a parent liaison for each of the top five languages within the school to be available to interpret for events, send out translated phone messages, and share their contact information with school families. The purpose of providing the contact information was so that other families can contact the liaisons with questions or concerns regarding the school without worrying about a language barrier.

One AR team member, currently one of the school's counselors volunteered to take on the recruitment of these parents. She had established parent groups at her two previous schools prior to Cedar Cove ES, and had extensive connections throughout the school community because she has lived in the area for several years. In order for these parents to serve effectively, the AR team was able to borrow interpretive microphones, also known as "talk and listen kits," from another school in the district so that the liaisons could interpret for parents who speak other languages during English presentations. The parents would listen to the interpreter's voice through the headset. This would ensure that there was no "lag" in time for any family attending events.

The second intervention implemented during this first action research cycle was a parent meeting, "Cedar Cove 101", to provide an overview about the school, major events, and major processes to parents. One goal was for the parent liaisons to be present and serve as interpreters at this meeting. In addition, on our parent survey, help with childcare had been the second most

mentioned suggestion from parents as to how the school could help alleviate barriers to participation. Therefore, we offered childcare for our parent meeting so that the parents could focus on the information from the meeting without having to worry about caring for small children. The meeting also incorporated time for parents to provide feedback on the topics they would like to learn more about so that future meetings could be coordinated. The AR team discussed the importance of valuing our parents' time and providing them with the information they felt would be most useful to them.

In order to coordinate this meeting, the first thing needed to be done was to secure permission to hold the meeting at the school on the desired date. An email was sent to the principal seeking permission to use the school's cafeteria on the desired evening along with a nearby classroom to serve as the childcare area. One of the team members offered to facilitate the childcare for the meeting. The AR team decided on the specifics on how the curriculum for the meeting would be delivered and which topics would be addressed.

Once the Cedar Cove 101 parent meeting took place, the AR team concentrated its efforts on coordinating the parent focus group interview in order to obtain more data prior to deciding upon the next intervention. Parents were first informed about and invited to participate in the parent focus group interview in the parent consent letter sent out with the survey in August. They were asked to contact the researcher if they were interested in participating. The AR team members and I also tried to gain participants through personal conversations with parents, hoping for snowball sampling to aid in the recruitment process. According to the *Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods,* snowball sampling is defined as using "a small pool of initial informants to nominate other participants who meet the eligibility criteria for a study. The name reflects an analogy to a snowball increasing in size as it rolls downhill" (p. 816). When minimal

interest was gained through these methods, I asked the principal to send out an email to all parents in the weekly school newsletter in hopes that interested individuals would contact me. This effort did generate two more participants. The AR team made a final attempt by sending a subsequent email asking teachers at the school to reach out to parents whom they felt may be willing to provide their opinions. This final email did result in three more parents to contact me. Although seven parents agreed to participate, in the end, there were a total of five parents who attended the parent focus group interview. The meeting was recorded and transcribed. The researcher did provide a summary of questions and answers to the AR team for their analysis and review.

After the Cedar Cove 101 meeting and parent focus group interview were both complete, the AR team met to reflect on the events. Data was collected at the parent meeting in the form of parent feedback forms. This data, along with the focus group data, was reviewed. The team reflected on what was learned, analyzed the data, and developed a plan for next steps and interventions. This marked the beginning of a new cycle of action research. The team agreed to hold a second parent meeting which incorporated topics based on parent feedback from the first meeting as well as the parent focus group. Again, this third intervention was implemented and observed throughout the winter of 2016-2017. Another parent survey was administered in February, and the data was compared to the initial surveys from August in order to see if the interventions made a positive impact on the school-family relationship at Cedar Cove ES. The AR team initially met every two weeks until implementation of the interventions was fully underway. Once the implementation phase of the first AR cycle had been completed, the AR team met as needed to discuss data and observations. Additional meetings were scheduled when needed in order to move forward throughout this process. Commitment to this team was crucial

to its success, as each member was an invaluable asset to the work being conducted. Please refer

to *Table 2* for a summary of the action research team's interventions and how they were

evaluated throughout the action research process.

Table 2 Intervention Plan

Proposed Intervention	AR Team activities	Anticipated Outcomes/Connection to problem, theoretical framework	Timeline	Data Collection
Parent liaisons for Spanish, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Hindi, and Amharic to help alleviate language barriers and also help to explain processes, events, etc.	The AR Team established goals for the role of these parents to include: outreach to their community to promote school events and meetings, serve as interpreters for the meetings, and make themselves available to answer questions. A team member worked to recruit parents to serve in these capacities.	Parent liaisons will serve to alleviate language barriers for CLD parents not only at school functions, but also with overall communication about events, processes, etc. at the school. This intervention ties to Bourdieu's theory because it works to compensate for the lack of social capital of CLD parents to better understand how to navigate our school setting.	Parent liaisons were established by October of 2016 in time for the first parent meeting. The liaisons were present for both parent meetings, and one liaison served as an interpreter for the Parent Focus Group interview as well.	Parent Surveys in the spring were evaluated to determine the overall effectiveness of this intervention. Also, observations of the parent meetings as well as a parent feedback from the meetings also provided data to help evaluate the effectiveness of the parent liaisons.
Cedar Cove 101 Parent Meeting	The AR team created a broad overview of major school events and processes to serve as the curriculum for this meeting.	The AR team hoped to provide all parents, especially our CLD parents, an opportunity to gain a better understanding of some major events and processes at the school. The team would like for parents to feel well versed in understanding parent conferences, the process for checking	This first meeting occurred on October 3, 2016. Upon review of the data from this meeting, the action research team decided that another meeting would be beneficial,	A Parent feedback form was provided to the parents after the meeting. The form data was analyzed by the AR team to determine which offerings were most helpful to parents

	Additional curriculum for future meetings was established from parent feedback forms and Focus Group feedback	students in and out of school, our Accelerated Reader program, Field Day, and the students' Friday Folder information. This intervention correlated to both theories comprising the theoretical framework of this study because the information provided can help to increase the social capital of our parents as well as help the school gain a better understanding of how our parents can help improve upon already established events, etc.	and the planning for that meeting began the second action research cycle.	and which topics they were most interested in learning more about during future meetings. The researcher also recorded observations from the meeting in the researcher's journal.
Cedar Cove 101 Parent Meeting #2	Curriculum for this meeting was established from parent focus group data, and parent feedback form data from the first Camp Creek 101 Parent Meeting.	The AR team once again hoped to provide a better understanding of some major topics at the school to our CLD parents. The meeting focused on topics such as: report cards and grading, tutoring, notifications during emergency situations, the process for checking students in and out of school, and the school's International Night which was occurring later that month. Again, this intervention correlated to the theoretical framework for this study as it helped to increase the social capital of our more marginalized families while helping the school gain a better understanding of how our parents can help improve upon already established events, etc.	This meeting occurred on January 19, 2017. The AR team then reviewed the data from this meeting, reflected, and made recommendations for future work at the school to complete the second cycle of action research for this study.	A Parent feedback form was provided to the parents after the meeting. The form data was analyzed by the AR team to determine which interventions were most helpful to parents in order to continue the work in reaching out to these families in future interventions. The researcher also recorded observations from the meeting in the researcher's journal.

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Sample

The participants for the action research team in this study were recruited through an email invitation. The participants were given a written overview of the study along with a consent form and were asked to contact the researcher if they would like to participate. They represent a random sampling of school staff and PTA members.

Parent participation in the anonymous survey was also a result of random sampling after electronic surveys were sent out to all parents of current students at the school as well as hard copies of the survey being made available at the school's Curriculum Night. Along with the survey, a consent form was provided which invited parents to contact the researcher if they were interested in participating in the parent focus group. Insufficient interest in the parent focus group was a problem, so I tried both verbal recruitment followed by an additional email reminder to all parents. When that was unsuccessful, I followed up with an email to the teachers of the school asking for parents whom they thought would be willing to participate. This means of recruitment sampling ultimately resulted in obtaining five parents who participated in the Parent Focus Group Interview.

Data Collection

The data used in this study is a combination of both quantitative and qualitative data that is by no means exhaustive. However, it does help to establish a problem or need that can be addressed through the action research process. It is important to note that although PTA membership itself is not entirely representative of all levels of parent involvement, it is one way to accurately account for parent involvement within the school. In addition, with regards to the district parent perception survey, although the percentage of parents who completed the survey

only represents a portion of our overall population, it does provide a baseline of information to help establish a problem and current need of the Cedar Cove Elementary School.

The action research parent survey is another quantitative method of collecting data to inform the team on current involvement levels as well as areas for possible improvement. Although the majority of the survey uses a Likert—type scale, there is one open ended question which serves to also provide qualitative data on parents' ideas about how the school can help improve involvement. This survey was used because it can easily incorporate the thoughts of a large number of parents in a manner which can be easily analyzed. The use of both quantitative and qualitative data serves to provide reliability and validity to the study.

The final step in ensuring trustworthiness of the data is triangulation. According to Simons, "Triangulation is a means of cross checking the relevance and significance of issues or testing out arguments and perspectives from different angles to generate and strengthen evidence in support of key claims" (2009, p. 129). All the data collected throughout this study was used to address the research questions. In addition, member checking was used with the action research team to ensure that the transcriptions and coding of those events were true to what was stated by the members.

PTA Membership

The problem for this research study was identified through the analysis of Cedar Cove's 2015-2016 PTA membership list and the PTA committee chairperson list. The list included every person who purchased a membership including parents and staff members. The list itself included a student name, followed by the parent or parents who purchased memberships. For staff members the word "STAFF" was placed in the student name area.

In order to fully examine the list, the race for each student was added on the spreadsheet followed by a column that delineated whether one parent or two parents had joined the PTA. This allowed for a total number of members to be identified as well as the racial and ethnic make-up of the members to be identified. Upon this analysis, it was found that there were 643 total PTA members. 98 of those members were school staff, which made up about 15% of the total membership. In order to obtain how many student families were represented, I looked at the total number of entries or rows on the spreadsheet which was 409. I subtracted the number of staff members that were not parents of students at the school, which totaled 83 to show that a total of 326 student families were active members of the PTA. In a school of approximately a little over 1000 students, where families average about two students at the school, I then calculated that 326 families represent a total of about 65% of our school's parent base. It is important to note that each family was only allotted one row on the spreadsheet whether they had one child or multiple children at the school, thus the use of an average of two students was used to estimate the overall representation percentage.

In further analysis of the PTA committee chairperson list, I found that there were 32 active committees, ten of which are assigned two chairpersons. I then noted that there were 6 members that were chairpersons for either two or three of the committees, which showed that there were actually a total of 35 individuals serving as committee chairpersons. The racial composition of this particular group was especially striking. Although Cedar Cove's White students represented 43% of population, over 80% of our most involved parents, as noted by the PTA committee chairperson list, were White. This was a gross overrepresentation of our overall demographic composition as a school.

Once the 2016-2017 PTA membership drive was concluded in September of 2016, the same process was completed using the new school year's PTA membership list in order to obtain updated PTA data for the 2016-2017 school year. The new list showed a total of 705 PTA members. This time, 115 staff members comprised 16% of total membership. I again subtracted the nonparent staff members which totaled 96, from the total membership lines of 443 which resulted in 347 student families being represented in the active PTA membership list for the year.

It is important to note that the school underwent a district rezoning process, which resulted in the acquisition of approximately 300 additional students for the 2016-2017 school year. Again, using an average of two children per family in a school of now 1,300 total students, the 347 families represented approximately 53% of the total school population. This was an overall decrease in the overall PTA membership from the prior year. Please refer to Figure 7.
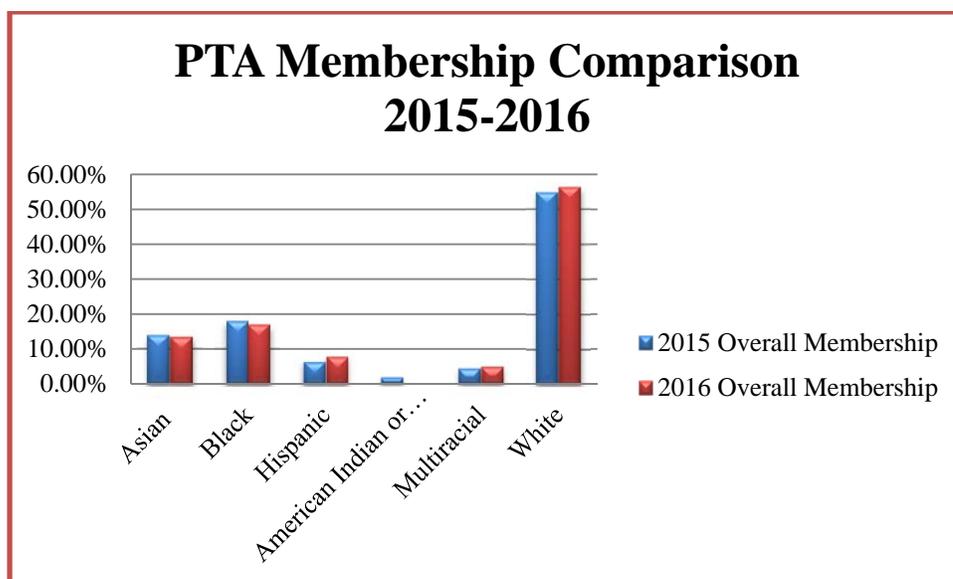

Figure 7: Cedar Cove PTA Membership Data Comparison.

I also analyzed the CCES PTA 2016-2017 committee chairperson list in order to obtain updated data. I found that there were 31 active committees, and this year only seven of those are

assigned two chairpersons. Three of the committees had yet to be assigned a chairperson. In addition, there were four members that were chairpersons for two of the committees, which resulted in a total of 31 individuals serving as committee chairpersons. Similarly to the year before, the racial composition of this group of parents did not reflect the overall demographics of the school. With 61.3% of the White student population being represented by the PTA committee chairpersons, this percentage, although a decrease from the over 80% representation in 2015, still over represents the total White population of the school of 41%. This information is represented in Figure 8 below.
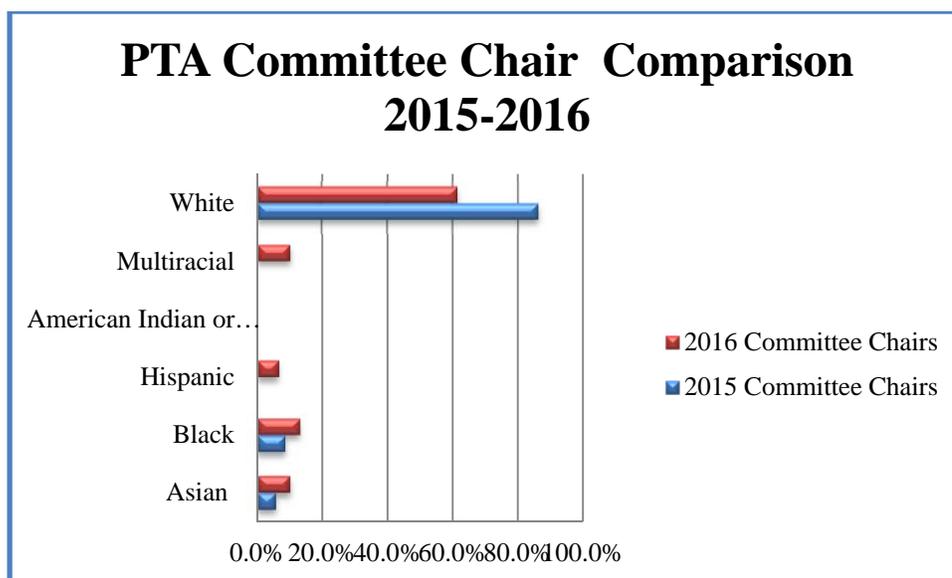
Figure 8: Cedar Cove PTA Committee Chair Comparison.

RBES Parent Perception Survey

In addition to the PTA data, I analyzed Cedar Cove's 2014-2015 Results Based Evaluation System (RBES) parent survey. This survey is initiated from the district level and is highly publicized throughout the school system to encourage participation. It is a 38 question survey that asks questions related to a variety of topics including instruction, technology,

communication, responsiveness, leadership, engagement, facilities, safety, discipline, and citizenship. Parents are asked to respond to each question by evaluating their perceptions using a continuum of five choices (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, or don't know.)

Initially, all questions were reviewed along with how parent responses fell on the continuum. A summary is provided on the bottom of the report to identify questions that fall under each theme or area. Subsequently, in order to obtain the percentage of parents that did not agree (by marking either strongly agree or agree) with the questions for each theme or area, the responses under the categories of disagree, strongly disagree, and don't know were averaged for each group of questions that related to each theme.

The analysis of that information led to the conclusion that in most areas, the percentage of parents who did not agree was 8% or less. However, in the area of communication, 9% did not agree, with the majority of that number stemming from a 22.3% disagreement with question 10 about language communication. Additionally, in the area of responsiveness, 21% did not agree. The questions that correlated to the area of communication were questions 8-10. The following were those specific questions:

8. *I have received information about the policies and procedures of the school.*

9. *The school keeps me well informed.*

10. *The school communicates with families in languages they can understand.*

The questions that correlated to the area of responsiveness were questions 11-14. Those following were those specific questions:

11. *My input is welcome at this school.*

12. *School leaders at the school are responsive to my concerns.*

13. If conflicts occur between school leaders and my family, they are resolved in a timely and appropriate way.

14. School leaders consider parent/guardian input when making decisions.

Although the responses were above the district level average responses for most of these questions, in comparison to the level of disagreement in other areas, this discrepancy suggested there was a problem that should be investigated.

This same process was repeated with the results from the 2015-2016 parent perception survey, and no significant differences in results were found. There was an 8% disagreement for the area of communication with 20.3% stemming from question 10 on sending communications in languages the family understands. There was also a 23% overall disagreement with questions about responsiveness. A final note concerning the parent perception survey results is that only a small percentage of parents filled out the survey. 132 parents responded to the survey in 2015 and only 107 responded in 2016. For a school serving over 1,000 students, this only represents approximately 20% – 25% of our families. These results solidified the continued need to address the research problem at Cedar Cove.

In order to compare parent perceptions against staff perceptions as an additional reference, the percentages of responses correlating to communication in the 2014-2015 RBES staff survey were also analyzed. Although there was not a theme that correlated to the area of responsiveness, the results did show that only 12 % of teachers did not agree under the area of communication. The questions that correlated to this area were questions 16 and 17. The following were the specific questions:

16. This school communicates with families in languages they can understand.

17. This school offers opportunities to help parents use district tools to monitor their

    student's progress.

It is important to note that 21% of parents in contrast to 12 % of teachers did not agree under the

area of communication. These results further serve to support that there is a discrepancy

between the school's perceptions and those of the parents in our community.

Action Research Team Meetings and Focus Group Interviews

        All action research team meetings were recorded using a smartphone application. The

recordings were transcribed using a service called Copy Talk. I then began the process of

coding. According to Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), "Codes are labels that assign

symbolic meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study" (p. 71).

These researchers further explain that, "coding is a deep reflection about and, thus, deep analysis

and interpretation of the data's meaning" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 72). During the first cycle of

coding, I reviewed the transcriptions and coded them using In Vivo coding. According to Miles

et al. (2014), In Vivo coding, "uses words or short phrases from the participant's own language

in the data record as codes" (p. 74). During the second coding cycle, the In Vivo codes were

then arranged into 17 smaller categories. These categories for coding were not predetermined;

rather they emerged from the data. In an additional cycle of data analysis and coding, the

categories were then combined and reduced to 4 major themes. Member checking as part of the

triangulation process as explained by Simons (2009), occurred by providing the team

opportunities to review the transcriptions for accuracy. In addition, the AR team was provided

summary notes immediately following each meeting as an additional means of member

checking.

I established a protocol and question guide for the parent focus group interview that was approved by IRB. Like the action research team meetings, the parent focus group interview was also recorded using a smartphone application, transcribed using Copy Talk, and then coded by the researcher using In Vivo coding. The interview protocol used open-ended questions in order to encourage genuine and open parent responses. The questions addressed the topics of parents' perceptions of the role the school should play in their child's education, parents' perceptions of their own role in their child's education, and ideas on how the school can help involve more of our culturally and linguistically diverse parents and families. Some of the specific questions asked were:

1. *Are you a member of the PTA? If not, is there a reason other than the cost that has kept you from becoming a member?*

2. *What is your opinion of your role as a parent in the school?*

3. *How do you feel you support your student in their education?*

4. *Do you feel as though your opinion and your participation are welcomed here at the school? If not, could you please explain why you feel this way?*

As the researcher, I incorporated active listening strategies as well in order to ensure that the interviewees' stories can be told (Simons, 2009).

Parent Survey

As mentioned earlier, I also designed an anonymous parent survey to help establish data that was used by the action research team in order to inform our interventions. This survey was also approved by IRB. The questions used a Likert type scale to which parents could respond. The following are examples of some of the questions used in the survey:

1. *How often do you receive information about what your child is studying in school?*

    a. *Almost never*
    b. *Once or twice a year*
    c. *Every few months*
    d. *Monthly*
    e. *Weekly or More*

2. *In the past year, how involved have you been in providing input about school decisions to the school leaders?*

    a. *Not involved at all*
    b. *A little involved*
    c. *Somewhat involved*
    d. *Quite involved*
    e. *Extremely involved*

3. *I feel welcome and respected in my child's school.*

    a. *Strongly Agree*
    b. *Agree*
    c. *Disagree*
    d. *Strongly Disagree*
    e. *Don't Know*

4. *I feel that the school could make changes that would allow me to participate more in my child's education.*

    a. *Strongly Agree*
    b. *Agree*
    c. *Disagree*
    d. *Strongly Disagree*
    e. *Don't Know*

This data was analyzed using an excel spreadsheet that sorted and filtered through the responses. The electronic surveys were compiled using Google Forms which automatically compiles the data into an excel spreadsheet. All paper pencil survey data and electronic data from the translated surveys were combined into one excel document for accurate analysis. One question on the survey was also an open ended response question that was analyzed and coded for themes using In Vivo coding as well. All data was reviewed by the action research team using a Data

Analysis protocol. Please refer to *Table 3* below for an overall summary of the data collection

and analysis for this study.

Table 3 Research Question Data Alignment.

Research Question	Data	Analysis Approach	Timeline
1. In which ways do cultural and linguistic diversity affect how parents define parental involvement? How does that definition affect the way parents engage with the school?	PTA Membership list	Quantitative	Analyzed July, 2015 and October, 2016
	AR Parent Surveys	Quantitative	Collected August, 2016 & February, 2017
	AR Team Meetings	Qualitative	Conducted throughout research cycles
	Parent Focus Group	Qualitative	Conducted in October, 2016
	Reflective Journal	Qualitative	Collected throughout research cycles
2. What is learned about alleviating barriers to CLD parent involvement through the action research process?	Annual Parent Perception Surveys	Quantitative	Analyzed July, 2015 and August, 2016
	PTA Membership lists	Quantitative	Analyzed July, 2015 and October, 2016
	AR Parent Surveys	Quantitative	Collected August, 2016 & February, 2017
	AR Team Meetings	Qualitative	Conducted throughout research cycles
	Parent Focus Group	Qualitative	Conducted in October, 2016
	Reflective Journal	Qualitative	Collected throughout research cycles

Limitations and Subjectivity

In my experience as a teacher of English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) for twelve years at the middle school level, I was afforded the opportunity to understand how culture, as viewed through nationality, race, language, and socioeconomics, can impact the way in which students learn. As an assistant principal at Cedar Cove ES, I am invested in the efforts to improve our school in any way that moves us in the direction of our district's vision and mission. Grant County's vision of becoming a system of world class schools aligns with the need to prepare our students for success in a global society. As a school, we model how to deal with global diversity. If we do not acknowledge, embrace, and engage our culturally and linguistically diverse parents, then we are not moving our school towards that vision and mission. More importantly, we are not tapping into the Funds of Knowledge, the knowledge obtained by students through their lived experiences at home, that could potentially pose great benefits to our school and its students (Moll et al., 1992; Araujo 2009).

My position as an assistant principal in the school also provided me both primary and secondary access. I was able to pull local, district, and state data on student and teacher demographics, and I also had access to PTA information. My position also allowed me to maintain a school-wide understanding of how our teachers, staff, and administrators interact with our culturally diverse students and families on a daily basis.

In my various duties and responsibilities, such as my role as the testing coordinator, I was afforded the opportunity to work with a variety of teachers. These roles also provide me with the ability to interact with teachers in an extension of the evaluative, academic observation typical of the teacher-administrator relationship. Because of this, teachers felt comfortable sharing thoughts and ideas about students, parents, and life outside the school setting with me. In addition,

because I was a fairly new administrator at the school, I was in a very interesting position to manage the roles of insider and researcher.   I began at this school as a teacher, and I feel this helped me earn the respect of many of the teachers there.   They felt that I understood the challenges they face each day in the classroom because I faced them myself just a short time ago. This connection provided me an advantage in facilitating the collaborative work necessary for the research. These opportunities allowed me to create a very strong rapport with teachers that led to their willingness to collaborate with me on initiatives and research that could help to support our students and their families.

In addition to my role as an assistant principal, I was also a current parent that fell into the "CLD" category. As a bilingual Cuban-American, I felt that I was able to reach out and make connections with other parents both through my interaction as a school representative as well as a parent of two Cedar Cove Elementary School students.   The PTA was very supportive of my efforts, and I was able to collaborate well with them in order to facilitate initiatives, interventions, etc. that could increase the levels of parent engagement for our school.

As a researcher and assistant principal, I worried much about balancing the time to dedicate to research, writing, and how this would overlap with my job. However, I found that others were as passionate as I was about this topic, and they were willing to help. I thought that finding enough interest for my action research team may prove to be difficult despite the positive rapport I have built with teachers, simply because I am an administrator at the school. Balancing the role of school leader and researcher was a daunting thought. However, I was able to recruit an action research team of 8 members in addition to myself, which is larger than I first anticipated. I was relieved to see that my role as an administrator did not deter school staff from wanting to be a part of this study.

Furthermore, I felt that because of my dual role as a school administrator in the school at which the action research study was taking place, it was imperative that this study have validity and reliability as well as trustworthiness. I also felt that the use of survey data allowed for impartial and anonymous information to be provided forthrightly by parents without the worry of any repercussions on their child. In addition, the use of surveys that were made accessible to all parents in the school encouraged input from all stakeholders to allow for diverse perspectives to be shared, and allowed for large amounts of information to be organized in a manner easily analyzed. All interventions were directly aligned to our research questions to ensure that the data collected informed our study's objectives. Finally, member checking was used with the AR team as they reviewed the data to ensure accuracy.

It is important to note the limitations of this study. One of the major limitations is the sample size. Only 110 parents completed the anonymous surveys in August, and 108 parents completed the survey in February. This only represents approximately 15% of our total student population. In addition, data generated from the parent focus group interview stems from the views of only five parents. Moreover, there were no parents of Asian or Black students represented in the group, and therefore perspectives from those cultural groups may not have been expressed. Finally, the data from the surveys and parent meetings may again, not have included those parents whom the study was most trying to reach. It is possible that the diverse parents who actually completed the surveys were already those parents who were actively involved in the school and felt comfortable communicating and voicing their opinions. Because of the anonymity involved with this data, there is no way to verify this for sure. During the research process, the team looked at the data to gain insight, while also remembering that the data may be representative more of the parents who are already involved in the school

community. We therefore used the data as information to guide our interventions and decisions, while simultaneously trying to assess what the data was not telling us. Consideration to the limited sample size should be given when examining if similar interventions could be administered in another school setting.

As I have previously stated, my hope was that if the interventions implemented through our team's research was successful, it could be replicated in similar schools across the nation. Ultimately, as a researcher, I would like for the work of this action research team to be useful in providing insight to the gap in literature addressing CLD parental involvement within a predominantly middle class, elementary school setting. With that said, consideration to the limited sample size should be given when examining if similar interventions could be administered in another school setting.

CHAPTER 4

THE CASE STUDY

This action research case study began my second year at Cedar Cove Elementary when I moved from a teaching position into an administrative position. As an assistant principal, my perspective of the overall diversity of our school was broadened beyond my limited teacher perspective. After conferring with my principal regarding my findings with the PTA membership list as well as the parent perception survey results, she agreed that working to involve our CLD parents and families could only help to strengthen our school community. In the fall of 2015, she agreed to approve my action research study, and I began preparations for the study.

Reflection

*Today was our initial AR team meeting. I was pleasantly surprised that Leslie Swanson came to the meeting ready to commit to the team. We are now a team of nine (including myself). The team was vocal and enthusiastic in responding to questions. They seemed receptive to ideas and reasons behind the study. They also mentioned possible ideas to help with intervention. We agreed to norms, and agreed to bring ideas for intervention to the next AR team meeting. I will email the team to thank them for their time, attention, and attendance. I will also obtain their Gmail addresses so that we can communicate via Google Docs (*Excerpt from Researcher's Journal, 2016).

Diversity Through a Different Lens

I came to Cedar Cove Elementary School as a fifth grade teacher after teaching middle school in a diverse, economically vulnerable setting for twelve years. Specifically, I had taught

English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and worked primarily within the eighth grade Language Arts department. I thought I knew what the term, "diversity" meant. After all, at my former middle school, we could count our "White" students on both hands. We served a predominantly Hispanic and Black population, and the need for interpreters for parent phone calls and meetings was a daily reality.

As I walked the Cedar Cove Elementary School building for the first time, I saw diversity through an entirely different lens. Yes, the faces and bodies of the students were smaller than those of my former middle school, as was to be expected. What I did not expect was the variety of color, culture, and language that was immersed in this environment. I walked into my personal children's classrooms and saw true diversity. There was no single dominant race or creed in those rooms. The classes were a representation of so many cultures, yet they were also coexisting in harmony. I knew that this place was going to be a welcoming place for both myself as a teacher, and my children as students.

As the year progressed, I saw how the parents here were different from the parents I was familiar with at my former middle school. These parents emailed me constantly. They asked questions, and voiced their opinions without solicitation. They came to school events and meetings. However, I also saw glimpses of the types of students I was used to seeing in my former teaching position. A few struggling learners, with parents that didn't reach out unless there was a problem, or worse, the parents that didn't respond after repeated attempts to reach them because there was a problem. I noticed that the teachers here many times struggled to reach those same students, and I did my best to help support both the teachers and students as best I could. However, those students were few and far between, and they were not the typical,

"Cedar Cove student." After all, this school was used to serving a large number of gifted and high achieving students, as supported by past standardized test scores.

As teachers became familiar with my background, they began to ask me more questions about how to help their ESOL students and communicate with their families. I noticed that as a school, we only sent home school communications in English despite the number of diverse families we served. This included our Friday Folders, which included weekly class updates with student work and progress charts. It also included all district communications, recreational flyers, and even our principal's weekly communication. As a teacher, I did not send home one communication in anything other than English. In addition, our front office staff only spoke English, and I was one of three people on staff at that time that could speak Spanish. I also noticed that all of the gatherings, parties, and musical performances occurred during the day. It made me ask myself, "what about the working parents?" After all, even I was a working parent and couldn't leave my classroom each time there was an activity that I wanted to attend for my children.

Cedar Cove had so many visibly involved parents and such high performing students, why was I so worried? Other parents hadn't complained. This was an exceptional school. Parents were continually visible throughout the school. Room parents and volunteers for the media center and cafeteria checked in daily. Was it really a problem if everything was sent out in English? It didn't seem to stop families from coming to parent teacher conferences, registration day, or Curriculum Night. Yet, the nagging question inside this researcher's head was, "How much more could we do for our students if we reached out to all of our parents: including the ones who work full time to make ends meet and the ones who don't speak English?"

Reflection

Last night was our Curriculum Night. Before the event, I checked the online surveys to see that over 80 parents had now responded to the English Survey as well as three in Mandarin and one in Amharic. I was thrilled to see that parents made use of the linguistic accessibility of the surveys. During Curriculum Night, I was able to have paper surveys available at a table in the cafeteria and several more parents filled out the paper survey. In addition, others stated they had completed it online. I was able to encourage at least three parents to contact me about participating in the focus group. I also had one parent come up to me and thank me. She said that the work I was doing was so important. That moment made me realize that others see the value in my study. It validated for me that I am on the right path with my research (Excerpt from Researcher's Journal, 2016).

Context

An intimate, little, neighborhood elementary school would not accurately describe Cedar Cove Elementary School. Our beautiful new building addition is a three story, 24-classroom edifice which includes a laptop lab, a science laboratory, windows galore, and a spectacular view from the third floor. It has eliminated the need for our learning cottage community, also known as trailers or mobile classrooms. The addition prompted a renovation of the school façade which now provides a uniform, sleek, brick exterior with a modern, industrial-looking awning. For us, the stereotypical vision of a quaint little elementary school is replaced with what looks like a sophisticated, large, university campus.

As previously noted, Cedar Cove Elementary School is a diverse, urban elementary school that serves a predominantly middle class socioeconomic population of approximately 1,300. Our families come from diverse cultural backgrounds as the students from our school

speak 33 different home languages other than English. The school's student population shifted

over the last few years from majority 58% White in 2005 to only about 41% White in 2016. In

addition, there was also an increase in the number of economically vulnerable students who

qualify for free or reduced lunch over the last ten years as well. That percentage increased from

13% in 2005 to 34% in 2015 (Georgiaeducation.org; Cedar Cove ES student registration

system). Conversely, the teaching population of Cedar Cove remains 92% White. The disparity

between demographics of students and teachers at Cedar Cove is consistent with the national

trends which reflect 14% or less of all educators represent culturally or linguistically diverse

backgrounds (Matuszny et al., 2007).

Although demographics and socioeconomics have shifted at Cedar Cove, the school's

academic achievement levels remain high for all students. The school consistently ranks among

the top 15 elementary schools in the district out of 78 in overall academic performance according

to district assessments. Additionally, the school has received high scores on the state's College

and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) for three consecutive years. This index

works like a state report card in scoring schools out of a possible 100 points. The index rates

schools in the areas of Achievement, Progress, Achievement Gap, and Challenge Points which

examines how a school is helping subgroups achieve academically. The CCRPI rating also

examines school climate financial efficiency (Georgia Department of Education, 2017). Cedar

Cove also benefits from a very active Parent Teacher Association (PTA) which provides many

volunteers and a variety of programs that support our students. A few of such benefits include

room parents that coordinate a myriad of school events like Field Day, book club, fine arts

programs, and International Night. About 65% of our families and over 80% of our staff are

active members of the PTA. However, review of the 2015-2016 PTA membership list showed

that 55% of the members represented our White students. In addition, 86% of our most active

PTA members and volunteers were, again, representing our White student population.

Reflection

At the end of the evening, I had a Spanish speaking parent from Colombia ask for a

moment of my time. Their daughter is in fifth grade, and as the family just arrived from South

America in the spring of last year, they do not speak English yet. He asked for clarification on

some items that teachers had discussed. He said he hadn't joined the PTA because he really

didn't understand what it was, and because they felt unable to participate more due to their lack

of command of the English language. I explained to the parent that his experience was the very

type of situation that we needed to know more about so that we can find ways to communicate

better. This was yet another validation of the importance of our study. Language barriers and

lack of understanding of our educational system were a big worry for these parents. How many

other parents feel the same way (Excerpt from Researcher's Journal, 2016)?

<div align="center">

The Action Research Team Members

</div>

The action research team was comprised of 2 school counselors, 5 teachers, 1 PTA

member parent, and me (researcher and assistant principal.) As noted earlier, recruitment of my

action research team was addressed through an invitational email from me providing an

overview of the purpose of the study along with a consent form. I provided the first meeting date

for the action research team which occurred in the summer of 2016, and asked for interested

participants to contact me as confirmation. My hope was to recruit a diverse team who could

offer varied perspectives and insights to the study. After the presentation of information about

the study at our first meeting on July 19, 2016, all eight participants agreed to continue on the

team and sign the consent form. All eight members were able to participate on the action

research team for the duration of the study. The members represented a small, but diverse

sample of our population: 1 Asian, 2 Black, 1 Hispanic, and 4 White members. There were no

male participants, so the action research team was comprised solely of females. This could be

due largely to the fact that there are only six males on the Cedar Cove staff, three of whom work

in the evenings. Following is a brief description of each participant. Please note that all names

mentioned are pseudonyms.

Carol Kennedy. Carol was new to Cedar Cove ES for the 2016-2017 school year. She

served as one of our school counselors and had many years of counseling experience in both the

private and public school settings. She also had experience in creating parent groups at her last

two schools specifically targeting Korean and Hispanic parents which reflected the needs of her

schools at that time.

Carol was an activist. She wholeheartedly believed in the purpose of this research, and

immediately volunteered to recruit parents to serve as our liaisons. She also volunteered to help

coordinate the childcare for our parent events. She genuinely enjoyed working with and getting

to know both our students and parents at Cedar Cove ES. Due to Carol's establishment of an

after school homework club for students, Carol was not able to attend many of our AR team

meetings. However, she was kept abreast of our meetings through the notes that were sent out

and through conversations with team members. She actively worked to ensure that she fulfilled

her duties as an AR team member.

Jennifer Murray. Jennifer served as the only ESOL teacher at the school. She had

previously taught in two other states and another district within the same state. She had even

taught in a bilingual program at one of her other schools. Her role prior to teaching at Cedar

Cove included serving her district as an ESOL coordinator for multiple schools. Her varied

teaching and leadership experiences provided the team with much insight regarding communicating with families of various cultures.

Jennifer was an advocate for families of other languages. She volunteered to help in any capacity she could. However, she was also a new mother whose child was under a year old, and also taught a state ESOL endorsement course. Therefore, her busy life, understandably, impeded her from participating even more.

Tiffany Mendez. Tiffany was another new teacher to Cedar Cove ES. As a native of Mexico, she was the only Hispanic representative on the team not including myself, the researcher. She taught Kindergarten for our initial year implementing a Dual Language Immersion (DLI) program in Spanish. She taught math and science to Kindergarten students entirely in Spanish. She had also been the DLI Kindergarten teacher at her previous school where she had earned a Teacher of the Year Award. Her experiences in both teaching and in living as an immigrant herself provided valuable perspective to the team. She understood the realities of living in a foreign place and learning a new language. She also provided a real perspective about how the school's actions, although well intended could be interpreted as insulting or even discriminatory.

Tiffany's ideas and comments constantly reminded the team of the limitations of our study. She cautioned us to remember that the data may not be complete because of the small sample sizes, and that the same perspectives our team was striving to obtain, may not necessarily be the ones voiced in our data. Her role as devil's advocate constantly kept the team grounded in ensuring that all possibilities were considered before decisions were made. Tiffany ensured that we kept the purpose of our research as a priority: to involve our CLD parents and families.

Allison McCormick. At the time of the study, Allison was in her second year of teaching at Cedar Cove Elementary School. She had taught fourth grade previously in another district, and her classes at that time had a high number of ESOL and economically vulnerable students. Allison's class at the time of our study was also diverse, and she was able to ask relevant questions based on her needs as a teacher seeking ways to better communicate with the diverse parents in her individual classroom.

Allison was willing to help with creative tasks such as signs and posters. Her honest questions were refreshing. Allison was not embarrassed of what she didn't know. She asked questions and truly wanted to understand if those topics or ideas were valid, offensive, fruitful, etc. Her desire to help her students and their families was warming and served as a reminder to all that we are here to form relationships, and those relationships are what increase engagement, involvement, and student success.

Veronica Rogers. Veronica Rogers was in her second year as a third grade teacher at CCES at the time of the study. She had previously worked as a paraprofessional both at Cedar Cove as well as another elementary school in the same district. Her parents are from Thailand, and she was the only Asian teacher at the school at the time of the study. In addition, Veronica had two children that attended Cedar Cove, so she also provided perspective as a parent.

Veronica felt very strongly about celebrating and promoting cultural diversity. She, like others, asked thoughtful questions to help the team find better ways to communicate with CLD parents. Many times, she brought up ideas, only to then convince herself of the reasons why it would not be effective for CLD parents. She worked tirelessly to help the team with its interventions including finding parents that could help with some translations for our initial meeting as well as recommending a parent for the focus group interview.

Sue Ellen Smith. Sue Ellen was the only parent and one of the two Black participants on the AR team. She was extremely involved in the school, an active member of the PTA, and originally from the island of Jamaica. Her thoughts and ideas were invaluable to the team. As the only non-educator on the AR team, her voice rang loudly with the parent perspective. In addition, she had three children who had all been Cedar Cove students, so she had been involved in the school community for many years. She not only provided perspective as a CCES parent, but also provided insight as to how situations were handled at the middle school and high school since she had children at both and was also an active PTA member at each school.

Sue Ellen's cultural background also brought perspective to the team's decisions as she shared her educational journey from her native island in the Caribbean. Her educational experiences there and how they differed from the experiences of her children here was a source of learning for her, and for us as a team. She shared how she had to learn a new system and find her place within that system to help support her children. Our goal as an AR team was to find ways to facilitate the journey of the other parents like Sue Ellen in our school community.

Leslie Swanson. As a first grade teacher, Leslie continually tried to find ways to shorten and simplify things to better serve our CLD families. At the time of the study, Leslie was in her third year at Cedar Cove, but she had previously taught in another state as well. She was committed to the work and contributed several ideas on how to best serve our families.

Leslie valued the importance of celebrating culture. The year prior to this study, she was serving a student who had just arrived from Colombia and spoke no English. His parents didn't speak any English either, yet she worked hard to ensure that the lines of communication were open. She had asked me to make phone calls and translate things to send home with the student. In addition, both she and the parent used Google translate to help with day to day

communications. Although sometimes the messages were less than accurate, the parents were so grateful for the efforts made by this teacher. In fact, these same parents participated in the parent focus group interview and were open and complimentary about their experiences with communication at Cedar Cove.

Tracy Zane. Tracy was the other school counselor for Cedar Cove ES. She had been with the school for a few years, had moved to another school in the district for a time, and then had returned to Cedar Cove four years ago. She was the other African American AR team member, and offered insight as to resources for our CLD families and the needs of the school from the socioeconomic perspective.

Tracy worked hard to ensure that details for the team's interventions were completed. She made necessary arrangements for events and committed herself to helping at each research related function in some capacity. She provided thoughtful insight for the team to keep in mind as to how our school lack of action or lack of efforts may be interpreted. She also asked the team to think about what the parents, like our students at times, were feeling, but not sharing with us.

The Action Research Cycles

The action research team for this study met every two weeks beginning July 19, 2016. According to Sagor, action research separates and distinguishes itself from other types of scientific or educational research. It is an investigation, "…conducted by the person or the people empowered to take actions concerning their own actions, for the purpose of improving their future actions" (2011, p. 5). Sagor contends that research falls under the action research category only if the focus is on your professional action, you are empowered in your position to adjust future action based on the results of your work, and if improvement is actually possible (Sagor, 2011). From the very first meeting, the research from this case study created a sense of

empowerment among the action research team members. There was no doubt that each member felt that the goal of this research related to our professional actions as a school, and to our individual roles and actions within that school. Through the permission of the principal to conduct the study, it was also clear that we were given the ability to make future changes based on the results of the study, and that no matter how involved our families were, there was always room for improvement. This action research process was a learning process which revealed the many avenues educators can explore to reach out and connect with their school community. The dangers of complacency and stagnancy in the world of education are immediate. The action research team for his study demonstrated how, as lifelong learners, educators must continually seek ways to meet the needs of the community which we serve.

Constructing and Planning Action

According to Coghlan and Brannick (2014), the first step in the action research cycle consists of, "…a dialogic activity in which the stakeholders of the project engage in constructing what the issues are, however provisionally, as a working theme, on the basis of which action will be planned and taken" (p. 10). Once the team was presented with the demographic information that served as the contextual background for this study during out initial AR team meeting, the members became vocal about their individual experiences within the larger context. The members agreed that the team should pursue ways in which to better communicate with and involve our culturally and linguistically diverse parents and families.

It was agreed to proceed with an initial parent survey to identify levels of current parent involvement and to gain opinions from the school's parents as to how to better communicate and meet their needs. The survey was sent out via email through an internet link. It was translated into Chinese, Vietnamese, Hindi, Spanish, and Amharic, which had been identified as the

school's top five languages other than English spoken by our families. The translations were also made available online, and the links were sent in the original email. In order to ensure that we made every effort in soliciting parent feedback, the surveys were also made available to parents in paper form at the school's Curriculum Night. Another important element to inform this study was the parent focus group interview. Information on this opportunity was provided with the consent letter that accompanied the initial parent surveys.

As the researcher for this study, it was important for me to ensure that during our research process we uncovered any issues which the team felt warranted attention (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014). Therefore, the design of the project has to be reached collectively as a team. I, alone, could not provide a detailed study design while also respecting and validating the ideas of the team. The action research process helped me to step back and remember that this was a collegial, collective process, and not one that I should mandate or drive in a particular direction as the researcher.

The second step of the action research cycle, which Coghlan and Brannick (2014) call, "planning action" (p. 11), is where the design of the project unfolds and decisions are made as to how to move forward to enact change. In this study, once the action research team began to design interventions by our second meeting, and it became clear that the team had many ideas on interventions that would benefit CLD families at Cedar Cove. A large obstacle overcome by the team was being able to narrow down the team's ideas to interventions that we felt could be implemented with fidelity and within a realistic timeline.

Several suggestions were made as possible interventions which included the translation of weekly teacher newsletters as well as translations of the principal's weekly communication letter called "Weekly Paws." Logistically, this idea had several obstacles which made it difficult

to choose as a viable option at that moment for the school. Another intervention mentioned was the creation of a welcome video which could be posted on the school website or sent to parents via email by classroom teachers. However, it was decided that perhaps this idea should be postponed for later in time. The team also discussed the need for overall cultural awareness and responsiveness training for all staff, especially the front office staff. Again, for various reasons discussed by the team, we decided to table that idea for interventions that were more manageable and able to be implemented efficiently and with fidelity.

It was both encouraging and frustrating to think about the copious amounts of ideas and suggestions brought forth by the AR team for possible interventions in this study. Although all of them would more than likely be extremely useful in helping to improve the levels of involvement of our CLD parents and families, we also had to think about ease of implementation as well as time. Some suggestions would have been an overwhelming undertaking that more than likely would have resulted in a failed intervention attempt due to lack of time and resources. Moreover, we needed to think about interventions that could be evaluated for effectiveness in order to have timely information with which to move forward in our research.

Taking Action and Evaluating Action

The AR team decided to begin by implementing two interventions which comprised the first cycle of our action research process. Because these decisions were made collectively as a team, it supported the essence of the action research process. Coghlan and Brannick (2014) identify the third step in the action research cycle as, "taking action" (p. 11). Results from our initial parent survey were obtained during the implementation phase of our interventions. Our analysis of the parent survey data suggested a positive and complimentary attitude toward the school from the parents. However, the team took note of the number of responses compared to

our overall population. We also considered the demographics of those surveyed. Finally, it was considered and taken into account that perhaps the parents the team was most intent on reaching, were not necessarily those who provided feedback on the surveys.

Parent liaisons. The first intervention included establishing a group of parent liaisons to help increase communication with our CLD parents. One AR team member volunteered to take on the recruitment of these parents because not only was she was familiar with the process of creating parent groups at her previous schools, but she also had opportunities for interaction with these parents in her role as a school counselor. We obtained a parent liaison for each of the top five languages within the school to help better communicate and alleviate the language barrier for many of our school's parents. The liaisons were willing to serve as interpreters for parent meetings, send out translated phone messages, and share their contact information with school families. The parents who served in this capacity were very willing to help, and were eager to provide this service to the school.

Cedar Cove 101 parent meeting. The second intervention implemented during this first action research cycle was a parent meeting, "Cedar Cove 101," to provide an overview about the school including major events and processes related to Cedar Cove. The team decided that this would be the most efficient way to provide parents with both information as well as an opportunity to connect with individuals in the school and ask questions. We decided that a flyer should go home in the weekly student folders to promote the event in addition to placing the flyer in the weekly electronic communication from the principal. The parent liaisons were to be present and serve as interpreters at this meeting. The team felt strongly about ensuring that no parents kept from attending because they did not speak English proficiently.   Results from our initial parent survey were available and evaluated by the team during this time. Help with

childcare had been the second most mentioned suggestion from parents as to how the school could help alleviate barriers to participation. Therefore, it was decided to offer childcare for our Cedar Cove 101 parent meeting as well. The meeting occurred during the first week of October.

Another important detail for the meeting was the decision to provide some sort of food or refreshment. The team had discussed how in many cultures, food is a central agent in building relationships and a sense of community. Therefore the AR team members baked and purchased some sweet and salty snacks for the attending parents. In addition, much discussion during our AR meetings was spent on determining the curriculum or topics to be discussed at the meeting. It was decided that Accelerated Reader program was something important to explain to parents because it affected all students in second through fifth grades, and there were quarterly recognition ceremonies for reading achievement to which parents were invited. The team felt it was essential to explain the program, and how parents could support their students within that program. Another topic chosen by the AR team was classroom parties. The team felt it should be explained that there were two annual parties at each grade level (the winter party and the Valentine's party) and that parents would receive communication about both of these. It was also shared with parents that each grade level had a musical performance to which they would be invited. Some information about each grade level performance was provided. Finally, the team also thought it best to share some information about the PTA, what it was, and how it helped serve the school. In order to help build community, an overview of the main school events sponsored by the PTA like Bingo Night, Back to School Night, and International Night was also provided.

It was decided that as an assistant principal, I would conduct the meeting in order to also set the appropriate pacing for those parents who would be interpreting for the event. Those

parents would be using headsets and may not be experienced interpreters, so it was important to pause frequently during the presentation so that information was not lost in translation. The team discussed the importance of honoring our parents' time and providing them useful information. Providing parents an opportunity to ask questions and give their thoughts was also important to the AR team. Therefore, a parent feedback form was solicited in order to learn which topics parents wanted to learn more about in order to help plan the curriculum of future meetings. In addition, AR team members stayed after the meeting to personally answer questions for parents on an individual basis.

Parent focus group interview. Although the initial hope was to conduct the focus group interview as soon as possible and prior to implementing interventions, obtaining participants proved to be a difficult task. Information on this opportunity was provided with the consent letter that accompanied the initial parent surveys, therefore they were made available electronically and through paper copies as well as in a variety of languages. The consent form asked for parents to contact the researcher if they would like to participate in the focus group. I also personally reminded parents of that opportunity during the school's Curriculum Night if they stopped by to fill out a paper/pencil version of the survey. However, responses were minimal. I was able to recruit one parent through a conversation about her child's academic progress, but no parents contacted me. The team decided that it would be best to ask the principal to remind parents of the opportunity in the weekly parent newsletter. At that point, I did have three more parents contact me with interest in the opportunity. With such few volunteers, the AR team tried to recruit parents whom they thought would be willing to participate, which resulted in two more volunteers. I then asked all teachers in the school to contact any parents whom they felt would be willing to participate and let them know of the opportunity. This random sampling process

resulted in seven volunteers, five of whom attended the actual focus group interview. However, this small group allowed for an intimate conversation where all parties were able to share their thoughts and ideas in a non-threatening and positive environment. The data from this parent focus group interview were analyzed and evaluated along with the data from the other interventions during the final stage in the action research cycle which Coghlan and Brannick (2014) call, "evaluating action" (p. 11) .

Reflection

I was very pleased to see the turnout of about 25-30 parents for our meeting last night. The parents were very appreciative for the information, and many asked questions concerning activities like Cub Clubs and standardized testing. One father came to me and said that he is new to Cedar Cove and at his son's former school, which was also a Title I school, they did not have to pay for after school activities or provide transportation. I explained to him that Title I schools receive federal monies which, in many cases, allows them to pay for things that our school must pay for out of pocket. He said he understood, and was glad that we had explained how the PTA helps our school pay for certain academic and technological items that enhance our students' education. He was not aware and didn't realize just how much the PTA did to help bring opportunities to the students at Cedar Cove. I can't help but wonder how many other parents, due to lack of experience in our specific type of school setting, are unaware or simply don't understand the role of our PTA. After all, I was an educator for twelve years and a parent of an elementary student when I came here three years ago, and I wasn't fully aware of the organization's role. How can we help parents better understand (Excerpt from Researcher's Journal, 2016)?

Another Cycle

Coghlan and Brannick (2014) claimed, "In our view a good action research project contains three main elements: a good story, rigorous reflections on that story and an extrapolation of usable knowledge or theory from the reflection on that story" (p. 16). After completing our first cycle of action research, the AR team now began to reflect on what our next steps should be. Our story was definitely good: making a difference to help build our school-community relationship. Now we were taking the time to reflect and think about what we learned.

The parent feedback form data from the Cedar Cove 101 meeting were discussed during our next AR team meeting. The team noted that most of the parents who attended learned about the meeting from the paper flyer as opposed to the weekly electronic communication from the principal. In addition, 90% of the parents noted that offering childcare really helped make it easier for them to attend. Furthermore, the parents said the topics discussed helped increase their awareness and understanding and a majority of them agreed that the session would help them become more involved with the school. Finally, the form provided an opportunity for parents to share which topics they wanted to learn more about. Many of the suggestions had to do with extracurricular opportunities within the school and one referenced processes during emergency situations at the school.

The team decided that another meeting be planned as a follow up session for parents. This would provide the team another opportunity to help address topics that were of concern to parents while also providing another opportunity to foster personal interactions and build relationships with our parents. We agreed that we would like for it to occur in January for several reasons. To begin, November and December were usually very hectic months for

families due to Thanksgiving and winter holidays. Also, this impacted the school calendar and

shortened both months significantly. Having the meeting in January would allow for us to meet

with parents at the beginning of a new semester and prepare them for the end of the year

activities. The date was purposefully chosen prior to the school's International Night in order to

really encourage parents to participate in and attend that event. Also, the year's first report card

was to be sent home the Friday before the meeting, so if parents had questions, those could be

addressed as well.

Shortly after the decision to hold another meeting was made, data from the parent focus

group interview were also discussed and analyzed by the AR team. It was noted that one of the

parents was very confused by the grading scales and grading system because in their country,

they didn't use letters such as A, B, etc. to reflect mastery. The parent also noted that in his

country, they did not use a 100 point scale either. The team noted that more clarity about grades

and our grading system should be provided. In addition, it was noted that some parents did not

understand what the acronym PTA stood for, much less what the organization did for Cedar

Cove. This data helped to solidify the team's plan for the curriculum for the second Cedar Cove

101 parent meeting.

At the second parent meeting, the team addressed grades and our district's grading scale

as well as the new format for report cards that was adopted by the district that year. Part of the

presentation also showed the audience how to check their children's grades electronically and a

handout was given to help facilitate this for parents as well. We decided to once again review

briefly what the PTA was, and how the organization served the school. We decided to also show

the parents how to access the PTA website via the school website, so that they would know who

to contact if they had questions in the future. The intent was to walk them through it, so they

could actually see how to access the information. International Night was also explained so that parents could understand how the event was a celebration of, appreciation of, and learning opportunity about our many cultures at Cedar Cove ES. In addition, the team felt it was important to discuss topics that parents had requested more information about from the first meeting like after school tutoring for academic support, after school activities like Cub Clubs, and how the school would communicate with parents in emergency situations. Most importantly, the team decided it was critical to provide parents the opportunity to ask questions and brainstorm their concerns in an open discussion, so time was allotted for that purpose as well.

Again, food was an essential piece to the planning of this meeting, so we decided that pizza would be served at this meeting since there was a school sponsor that would provide the pizzas at a discounted price. A flyer was designed and sent home the Friday before the meeting along with report cards, and it was also sent home electronically in the principal's weekly communication. The team divided up the presentation this time and each member presented a piece. This not only broke up the session a little for parents, but it allowed for parents to get to know multiple agents in the school community. There were two additional PTA members who agreed to attend and present information, along with another assistant principal who agreed to present the information about tutoring. Parent feedback forms were also given at this meeting as well.

The data from these parent feedback forms were analyzed by the action research team. Results showed that most parents learned about the meeting from either the flyer sent home in the student folders or the weekly electronic communication from the principal, as opposed to learning about the meeting from another parent. 75% of responses indicate that offering childcare made it easier to attend, and 100% of responses agreed that the topics discussed at the meeting

were helpful and increased understanding. Despite their increased understanding, only 60% of the parents noted that this understanding would help them to become more involved in the school, while 40% stated they weren't sure yet.

The team also agreed that the final parent survey should be sent out in February. We used the same methods as we did in August, except that we did make a designated place in the front office for the paper copies to be dropped off. Interestingly, almost the exact same amount of surveys were completed in February as there had been completed in August. 110 parents completed surveys in August, while 108 surveys were completed in February. All of the February surveys were completed online. Although the paper copies were made available, perhaps more parents were now aware that the principal sent our weekly electronic communications. Another possible reason for this is that there was no large, school-wide meeting such as Curriculum Night in August to promote the survey in paper form. Despite this, I was pleased to note that parents took advantage of the translated electronic surveys in Vietnamese, Amharic, Spanish, and Mandarin.

The data from the surveys were analyzed. Once again, Google Forms was used to generate a spreadsheet of the data and sort and filter through the responses. The post surveys showed an increase in the percentage of more negative responses from parents regarding involvement. The AR team discussed this as a positive sign that the parents who completed this post survey were actually more diverse parents whom we were targeting for our research. The team discussed the possibility of the parents feeling more able to express their opinions after our team's interventions this year as way to continue to strengthen the school-community relationship at Cedar Cove Elementary School.

Reflection

We have just had our second Camp Creek 101 parent meeting. I was disappointed that only about 10 or 12 parents were in attendance. I felt that for sure, after the success of the first meeting, we would have several more parents come to this meeting. However, the parents were very attentive, and gave very positive feedback about the content of the meeting. I had two parents volunteer to help serve as parent liaisons. One was fluent in both Amharic and Spanish because she was Ethiopian, but was raised in Cuba, and another parent who speaks Croatian, Bosnian, and Serbian. It was so encouraging to see these parents who wanted to help in any way possible to involve their neighbors in the school community (Excerpt from Researcher's Journal, 2017).

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Conclusion

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The story of Cedar Cove does not end with the conclusion of this study. Its efforts to engage its CLD parents and families will continue. This school is a playground for diversity. It is a place where students learn from each other, grow with each other, and appreciate the differences that make them unique. For children, this seems seamless and an easy task. Perhaps as adults, we need to take a step back and learn lessons from the children we teach each and every day. The children at Cedar Cove are ready to live and engage in a global society. With their help, parents and teachers can be ready to embrace that global society as well.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

This research study sought to increase the parental involvement of culturally and linguistically diverse parents and families at a high achieving, predominantly middle class, urban elementary school in the southeastern part of the United States. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. In which ways do cultural and linguistic diversity affect how parents define parental involvement? How does that definition affect the way parents engage with the school?

2. What is learned about alleviating barriers to CLD parent involvement through the action research process?

Data from pre and post parent surveys, AR team meetings, a parent focus group interview, parent meeting feedback forms, and the researcher journal were used to determine findings of this research study. Please refer to Table 4 below for a summary of the findings from this study.

Table 4: Research Findings.

Research Question	Data Sources	Findings
1. In which ways do cultural and linguistic diversity affect how parents define parental involvement? How does that definition affect the way parents engage with	• Focus Group Meeting • Action Research Team Meetings • Researcher Journal Findings • Pre and Post Parent Surveys	• Parents of various backgrounds feel that by communicating with the teacher, they are demonstrating their involvement. • Many parents feel limited by language barriers and therefore do not make more of an effort to

the school?		• involve themselves with volunteering at the school, attending events, or joining parent groups such as the PTA. • Cultural experiences may influence parent levels of involvement due to inexperience with or lack of knowledge about the current educational setting.
2. What is learned about alleviating barriers to CLD parent involvement through the action research process?	• Focus Group Meeting • Action Research Team Meetings • Researcher Journal Findings • Pre and Post Parent Surveys • Parent Feedback Form	• Individual perceptions can impact communication; therefore, school personnel must strive to be accommodating and helpful, without being insulting or condescending. • Parent liaisons can serve as a way to connect CLD parents to school community • Providing childcare for school functions and offering varied times for meetings or events can help more parents attend and feel more welcomed by the school. • Technology can help to disseminate information quickly, but many parents also benefit from information in paper form.

Research Question 1: In Which Ways do Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Affect how Parents Define Parental Involvement? How Does that Definition Affect the way Parents Engage with the School?

This study attempted to gain information on how culturally and linguistically diverse

parents and families define parental involvement with regards to their children's school. Then,

the study tried to further understand how that definition influences the manner in which parents

engage with the school. Obtaining one, single, definition from parents of varying backgrounds,

cultures, and languages proved to be quite difficult. After all, the literature supports that parent perceptions of their roles is based on their past, individual experiences with schools (Whitaker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2013). In a school where over 23 languages other than English were reported by parents to be spoken in the home and students from 29 countries other than the United States were in attendance (Cedar Cove ES student registration system), defining parent involvement became an inferential process where the definition presented itself through opinions and comments.

The researcher first used parent surveys to establish the current climate and obtain a baseline of parent perceptions about involvement at Cedar Cove ES. In addition, action research team meetings were recorded and transcribed. All members of the AR team were supportive research efforts to increase CLD parent involvement. Discussions during the meetings provided insight and possible solutions to challenges and barriers that CLD parents may face in order to allow for increased levels of involvement. Notes from the researcher's journal as well as a second set of parent surveys also provided information to answer this research question. Ultimately, however, the most specifically relevant data that helped to answer this question was obtained through parent opinions expressed during the parent focus group interview. This interview was also recorded and transcribed to allow for both coding and analysis as well as member checking through AR team discussions. There were two main themes generated from all of the data to address the first research question:

1. Parent Perceptions based on culture, values, and experiences can vary.

2. Parents may feel that certain barriers keep them from becoming more involved.

Theme 1: Parent Perceptions Can Vary

      Focus group. The questions developed for the parent focus group interview were designed to help address how cultural and linguistic diversity can influence how parents define parental involvement and how that definition affects how the parents interact with the school. The very first question asked parents to rank in order, which task they felt was the most important role of the school: A) to teach content and curriculum, B) to teach students life skills such as collaboration and respect for others, or C) to support and promote students' emotional and physical growth. All of the parents except for one agreed that the school's most pressing priority was to teach content and curriculum. One parent, Molly, said:

> "I agree with the order, A, B and C. I send my kids to school so they can learn the content
> and curriculum. But I also send 'em to school so they can learn life skills with other kids
> that they cannot get through homeschooling, like collaborating and working with other
> people and socialization. That is something that homeschool can't do. So that's why they
> go to the school and they're around students all day without the parents overseeing things.
> And it's just a bonus, the emotional/physical growth. Although they do get emotional
> interactions with kids that they have to sort out for themselves, as a parent, I can also help
> them by talking about things and what they should do. And I can send them to soccer for
> physical growth. So C is a home thing, but it definitely helps a lot in the school."

Another parent, Alicia, said that she agreed with the ABC order, but that it was very hard to teach content and curriculum if the other two skills weren't in place yet. Therefore, although she agreed with the order, she struggled with understanding how it could be accomplished if B or C were missing.

There was one parent, Enrique, who also happened to be the only male participant, who disagreed with the ranking mentioned by the other participants. He said that he felt it was the school's number one priority to teach students life skills such as collaboration and respect for others. He felt that the school does this in conjunction with the parents and not in isolation because without this, without having these skills of respect and collaboration, along with being emotionally stable, then teaching content and curriculum really can't happen. So Enrique felt that teaching content and curriculum will fall into place naturally in the school institution once life skills and emotional stability are addressed.

This discussion led to parents sharing what they felt was their role as opposed to the school's role. Findings from this data showed that many parents consider communication a key component in helping to define parental involvement. During the parent focus group interview, communication with the teachers was greatly discussed as what parents consider an essential part of their role to support their children's education. However, the idea on how to communicate and for what reasons, varied based on the parent and their cultural values or beliefs.

Two parents shared that they send emails periodically to the teachers, just to keep them informed about things that may impact the students' behavior or learning. For example, one parent, Sally, noted that there was one, particular week where, as a family, they had several church functions in the evening. Sally knew her son was most likely tired and perhaps not performing as he usually did, so she took it upon herself to send an email to the teacher letting her know that the child may seem tired or sleepy, and the reason for it. She felt that it was important for the teacher to know this information as it could impact her son's performance in school. Molly also shared that she had noticed her child had been losing behavior points on the daily behavior system her child's teacher used. She emailed the teacher to let her know that the

child had not been sleeping well for some reason, so she would know that perhaps the behavior was related to a physiological situation.

One set of parents at the focus group interview were from South America and spoke very little English. They had just arrived in the United States the one year earlier. They mentioned how they felt that communication was so important to help their child be successful. They described that there have been times when they've had to email the teacher and say, "Okay. We didn't finish this," and then tried to explain why to the teacher. The mom, Donna, stated that sometimes, she's had to admit that she didn't understand it. And that's why she couldn't help him with it. These parents felt strongly that it was their responsibility to understand and ask questions. The father said that they have had to make the effort. For example, when grades come in, and they don't understand why, they come, and they'll make an appointment with the teacher right then and there because they want to understand. The parents said that if they do not understand, how can they hold their son responsible when they don't know what to tell him to do?

One parent, Sally, shared her background. She told the group she was born in the Philippines and came to the United States when she was eight. Her father is British and Filipino. Her mother is Hungarian, but she was raised in the United States. Sally is a highly involved parent at Cedar Cove. She has one child that has now moved onto the middle school and is currently in 6th grade. The other child is a current fourth grader at Cedar Cove. She is an active PTA member who was the main coordinator for the school's International Night for the past few years. Sally explained that as a child, her parents never really involved themselves in her school or schoolwork:

"Well, my parents did not ... They weren't involved as much. They didn't help with

homework, even. So we did our own homework. I was a latchkey kid. You came home.

You let yourself in with your key, independent. You did your homework. You watched

some TV. I started dinner."

She continued to explain that there was one catalyst that prompted her to think differently about

her role in her children's education. She further explained that something she read many years

earlier strongly helped to form her current belief system:

"So there was one thing that I read right before my daughter went to school. And the

statement was, 'The biggest predictor of your student's success was your involvement in

their school.' So that has motivated me in how I was going to be within the school. So

because I read that statement, it hit me pretty hard that, okay. I'm gonna be involved."

This was a significant statement because it showed how one piece of information can stimulate a

change in behavior from what one considered to be appropriate, or normal. Sally's parents were

not involved in her education, yet one statement created a new mindset for Sally as she was

thinking about her own children's future educational experience.

Throughout this discussion, Sally made another statement that prompted discussion. She

stated that through her work as the coordinator for the school's International Night, she had the

opportunity to get to know several Chinese families, and that their approach to education was

different. She said,

"I've spent a lot of time with International Night and I've spent a lot of time with the

Chinese families and gotten to know them from Cedar Cove, they actually feel very

hands-off. They don't need to get to know the teacher. The teacher's doing her job, and

they don't wanna interfere with her job. But I would tell them, say, 'No, no, no. Get to

know your child's teacher!' Really get to know them because then you'll get a better experience from the school."

This statement provided perspective about how some cultures do not believe that it is their role to communicate with the teachers or the school. Therefore, depending on cultural experiences and perspectives, the definition of parental involvement can vary.

One question in the interview's protocol directly asked, "What is your opinion of your role as a parent in this school? This prompted Molly to say, "I feel like I don't have to be very involved because the school seems to have so much covered." This comment then prompted others to again talk about how they felt strongly that education is a partnership where both the school and the parents must be involved in helping the student be successful. Donna, the Columbian mother who did not speak English noted that she feels it is her responsibility to learn English and learn the expectations because they've come to a country where they speak English. She explained:

"You have to come and follow the same rules. It's just like when you're driving. You come, and you follow the same rules of driving that apply here. I can't bring from what I'm doing back in Colombia, like the bad example of my country, I have to follow what's being done here."

Again, the perspectives shared here demonstrate the complicated and diverse intricacies of how varying points of view based on experiences and culture can adjust how parents define parent involvement.

Action research team meetings. In addition to the focus group data, AR team meeting data were also used to help address the first research question. The team also felt that communication was a key component to parent involvement. One aspect of communication that

the team discussed was how parents can perhaps not always understand acceptable ways to communicate or be involved. Many times, it can stem from their personal experiences with schools in their cultures.   For example, Sue Ellen Smith said that her sister-in-law is from China and she didn't understand that here, you communicate with the teacher about your child's progress.

> "My sister-in-law is from Shanghai. And the first conferences, she didn't go because she didn't really get it. 'Why are they sending me this to come in?' So she didn't go to her first conference until my niece was in third grade. And I went with her. And I'm like, No. You're supposed to go to these things. That is why they sent it to you. They want to talk to you. And she's been here forever. And it takes some time."

Sue Ellen even stressed that her sister-in-law was fluent in English, so it wasn't a language barrier that kept her from communicating with the school, rather it was a misconception based on her personal, cultural experiences.

The team also discussed how each school can differ in promoting or explaining its expectations for parent involvement, and that can also impact how parents, in turn, create their understanding of what parent involvement encompasses. For example, Tiffany Mendez was explaining about her transition from a Title I school, to Cedar Cove. She notes that the parents were much different at Cedar Cove, in a high achieving, middle class setting, and how it was a learning experience for her to adjust how she interacted with her parents. She noted:

> "I'm coming from always being in a Title-I school. This is the first time I'm here with this. So it was a lot of, in the beginning, coming and talking to parents and all that about, one, being in kindergarten. And kindergarten is a lot about approaches to learning and all the things a kid is supposed to do other than the academics. And, coming from a Title-I

school, they're used to talking to the parents about their behavior, their self-control, all the other things. And here, it was like, 'Don't tell me what to do with my child.' I was like, 'Oh, sorry.' You know, it was a very different experience for me when I started, like 'Oh, okay.' So then, I was like, what do I do? Do I say this? Do I not? I don't say it? Am I going to get in trouble? What's going on? So it was very hard because a lot of the time, you can't move forward ... "

The team acknowledged that schools help parents define involvement through their actions and how they encourage interaction. The interventions that the team implemented in this study were based on the premise that the school can help to promote involvement at all levels to all parents, not matter their current perspective, understanding, or belief.

Parent surveys. Another source of data used to address the first research question was parent surveys. The surveys were administered at the beginning of the school year in August and then again in the spring to help provide information on CLD parent involvement at Cedar Cove Elementary School. Survey results were consistent from fall to spring in that about 75% of the parents who completed the surveys were actively communicating with teachers at least monthly if not more. In addition, about 90% of parents agreed that they receive information from the school about what their children are studying monthly if not weekly. This again serves to promote the idea that communication is a central action surrounding involvement.

Conversely, the parent survey data showed that less than 30% of Cedar Cove's parents are involved in any sort of parent group within the school. In addition, the spring survey showed that less than 50% of parents have visited the school, and only about 25% of them have helped out at the school on a regular basis within the last year. Again, the data support the finding that many parents place an emphasis on communication as opposed to physical presence when

defining their terms of involvement with their child's school or educational experience. Please refer to Figure 9 below.
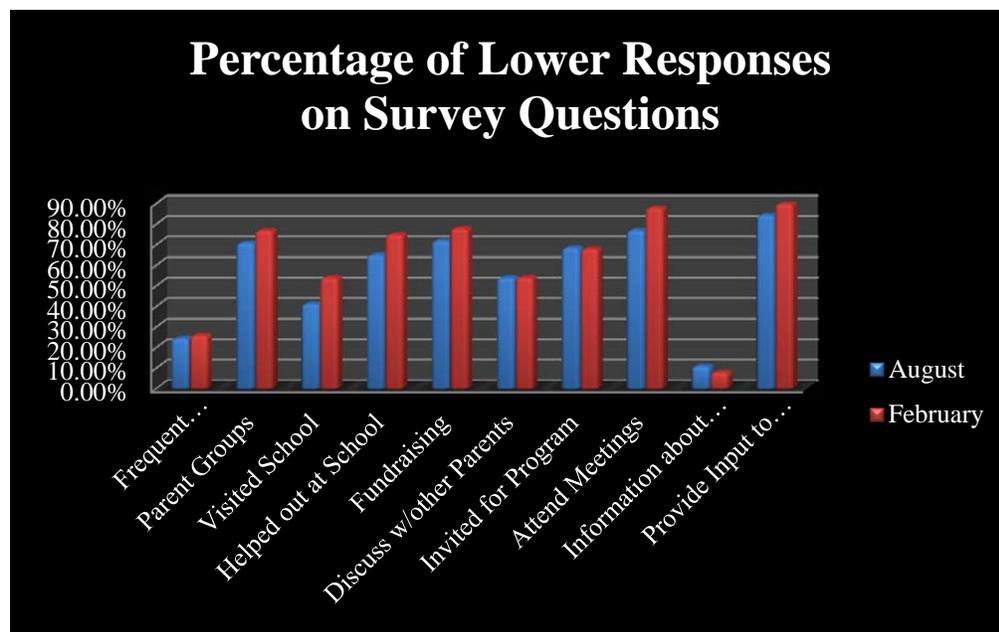

Figure 9: Percentage of Lower Responses on Pre and Post Parent Surveys.

Theme 2: Parent Barriers to Involvement

The second theme that emerged from the data in this study in reference to the first research question was that parents feel that there are barriers that keep them from participating and being more involved. Throughout the study, data for this theme was collected from the same sources as the first theme. The parent focus group, AR team meetings, and parent surveys were used to support these findings.

Focus group. The parents who participated in the focus group interview were able to share their thoughts about a few topics, and what they shared supported the finding that parents perceive certain barriers to their involvement. One parent, Alicia, shared that she works for another school in the same district as Cedar Cove, but she noted that the needs there were different. When discussing the role of the school, she said that the role of the school may need to

change based on the needs of that particular school, its students, and its parents. She said that many times schools can't focus on instruction due to other needs. Alicia stated, "Even just thinking about if they're ... emotionally, healthy to be at school and learn. You know, some ... food, just having the nutrients to ... just things as simple as that." This comment noted that sometimes socioeconomic situations impeded parents from participating more. Their financial resources are so limited, that providing for the basic needs of the family can supersede the need for the parent's involvement with the school.

One of the questions asked in the focus group was:

Are you a member of the PTA? If not, is there a reason other than the cost that has kept you from becoming a member?

After a few participants shared that they were members, Enrique, the Colombian father asked in Spanish, "What is the PTA?" The group began to explain what the acronym, PTA stands for, and what the group did at Cedar Cove ES. They explained how the PTA funded programs for the students that otherwise the school could not afford. The explanation helped Enrique understand and then he continued on by saying that we use a lot of acronyms that they don't understand. He added, "Same thing with grades. They put a letter on there. And so is the letter good? Is the letter bad?" His comment reiterated the notion that cultural nuances and idioms can certainly create unintended barriers to CLD parents if they are not explained in a clear manner. It was clear that even if he understood and could translate the letters, "PTA," it would not help him understand the importance of the organization as it related to his child's school setting.

In addition to the language barrier presented by acronyms and culturally specific terminology, the actual task of acquiring proficiency in English can in and of itself create a barrier for some CLD parents. Donna, the Colombian mom had emailed me in Spanish about

participating in the focus group and said, "I would love to help. However, I am always hesitant to volunteer because my English is not up to par. And I don't understand everything." I responded to her that she should never feel embarrassed about her English, and that I would love for her to provide her opinions. The evening of the focus group arrived, and when I introduced her to the parent liaison that served as her interpreter, she smiled with a sigh of relief, and said, "Thank you so much. You don't know how worried I've been because of my English." This conversation supported that parents may feel insecure about involvement when there is a language barrier even when the school tries to be welcoming and encouraging.

Action research team meetings. The team discussed a variety of barriers that keep parents from being more involved in the school setting. Language barriers, work schedules, and lack of understanding about the educational system were discussed on various occasions. The team spent time discussing ways in which the school can help to minimize some of those barriers by examining the manner in which the school communicates with the parents.

To begin, language barriers were certainly addressed in various ways in all action research team meetings. In one particular meeting, I shared about my conversation with a parent on Curriculum Night at the beginning of the school year. I explained that after the classroom meeting with the teacher where a PTA video was shared along with a power point with all sorts of information about what parents needed to understand about the upcoming schools year, a parent stopped and asked if he could speak with me briefly..

"I had another parent at the end of the evening, not near the survey table, who came to me and asked for lots of help because their child ... They are from Columbia. The child just arrived in the late spring last year. None of them speak any English. He was asking me, 'What is PTA? I haven't joined because, my wife and I, we don't understand what it is.

And we don't really understand how we can help or how we can be a part of it because we have such a language barrier.' "

The team tried to offer ways in which the school could help families like these feel more connected to the school. The team discussed many ideas including finding ways to translate teachers newsletters and the weekly newsletter from the principal. However, logistically, the team discussed that the school faces challenges because of the fact that there is not one, single, dominant language. Paying for professional translations of these documents would be extremely expensive, and it would be a very difficult task to find individuals with enough expertise who would be willing to translate all of the different communications into the different languages necessary.

In one meeting, the team was discussing what slogan should be put on a poster to promote the copies of the parent survey that we were administering. The team decided that a short phrase should be used in the top five languages spoken by our school families. However, then there was a long discussion on which words should be used. The team debated on using, a variety of short phrases including: "We'll help you make your voice heard.", "We value your opinion.", "We need your help", "Do you feel heard?", and "Do you feel valued"? Then, it was suggested to use, "We need your voice," and "Be a voice." These suggestions prompted Leslie Swanson to say, "Cause voice, when we're using it just now, the connotation is more like your opinion. But if you say voice, and we don't use the correct connotation ..." This prompted further discussion about how words with multiple meanings could be translated incorrectly. Another suggestion was made to use, "Your opinion matters," but the word matter also has two connotations. Finally, the team decided to settle on using the phrase, "Your opinion is

important," because we felt that it could be translated easily into languages without confusion or misunderstanding. Leslie said, "This is so hard." My response was:

> "I know, right? Three little words, but see; this is why this is such a difficult topic 'cause, when you think about it, we're perseverating on a phrase! And think about communication for some of these families, how one little phrase could just turn their understanding upside-down. It could really make such a difference."

This conversation certainly provided the team with perspective about the difficulties of communicating when a language barrier is present.

It was evident that the team began to feel the frustration of many of our CLD parents who have a language barrier. For the team, the frustration lasted through a few minutes of discussion and debate, but for many CLD parents, the frustration is a reality reflective of their emotions each time they interact or communicate with the school. Sue Ellen added, "Because my sister-in-law's called many a time upset. And it's nothing to be upset at- just because she didn't ...She didn't comprehend properly what someone says."

The idea of parent liaisons that could serve as an ambassador to each cultural community began to gain favor with the team. We discussed how these liaisons could truly serve as a comfortable, safe, and less intimidating resource for parents to ask questions and gain information about the school. This intervention was decided upon as a means to reduce the language barrier as well as a source of information to help clarify misconceptions and help explain common school practices that as educators, we could possibly take for granted.

The AR team also discussed the idea of creating things like videos to explain major groups, events, and curriculum information throughout the year. The team discussed how these videos could be produced in several languages and then posted on the website so that parents

could access them throughout the year to gain information even if they aren't able to come to a physical meeting. Parent liaisons could help with the production of the videos and helping to find students and possibly other adults who could help to "perform" in the videos.

Finally, the AR team discussed that sometimes barriers can be created due to inexperience with the educational system. We discussed how one parent from Ethiopia set up a meeting with me as the fifth grade assistant principal to ask questions about her child's progress at the beginning of the year. She was very polite, but also had some concerns. I shared with the team that I was wondering why the parent wanted to speak with me since I wasn't familiar about the specific progress of her child other than what was available in the gradebook. In my conversation with the parent, she shared her reasoning. I told the AR team:

> "Well, my question was, 'Have you tried to contact the teacher first and build that relationship? Because they can really tell you about the child's performance that I can't. I'm not in the classroom.' And she basically said that she can, but she's been hesitant because she worries about coming across the wrong way, and she doesn't want to insult anybody or she doesn't want to make the teacher feel like she's questioning them. And she said, 'I grew up in a very different culture and a very different school system. So I want to make sure that I'm not coming across ... I don't want to be disrespectful.' That was the word she used."

The team discussed how this parent was well informed, involved, and asking relevant questions about educational services and programs. Despite this, her cultural experiences kept her from asking questions directly to the teacher. The parent was concerned with coming across as disrespectful, not understanding that here, if you ask to speak with the administrator without

contacting the teacher first, the teacher may feel that the parent didn't have the courtesy to provide her or him an opportunity to address the concern.

Therefore, the team agreed on the importance of ensuring that parents understood the process and protocols for communication at school. We discussed that the school must ensure that teachers share their email addresses as well as the school telephone number with parents. We also noted the need to highlight these processes for parents throughout the year in a variety of forums because most parents receive the handbook at the beginning of the year, but there is so much information shared at the beginning of the year, that it can be overwhelming for many parents.

Parent surveys. For this theme, the parent surveys were extremely informative because findings showed that in both the pre and post survey administrations, parents mentioned how they felt that many times, they felt their involvement was limited due to scheduling conflicts with their work schedules. These feelings were mentioned most specifically in the open ended comment section at the end of the survey. In the fall, out of 38 comments that were provided, 13 of the comments specifically noted difficulties due to work schedules, which they felt limited their ability to attend events at the school. In the spring, about five out of 29 comments also noted this. In addition, a large number of other responses (8 in the fall and 8 again in the spring) cited the need for childcare in the morning, after school, and during meetings, to help the working parents and their children be more active in the school community.

Interestingly, the parent survey results noted that about 57% of parents who completed the survey did not feel that the school should make changes that would allow them to participate more in their child's education. Also, over 95% of parents agreed that the school sends communication in a language they can understand. These results suggest that either the majority

of our CLD parents have enough English proficiency to understand the school's communications in English, or the majority of the parents at Cedar Cove that do have a language barrier did not provide input on this survey. Only 108 surveys were completed in the spring. Because this number represents less than 20% of our parent population, it is still quite possible that the survey results do not include the opinions of our most marginalized parent groups who experience a language barrier.

Research Question 2: What is Learned About Alleviating Barriers to CLD Parent Involvement through the Action Research Process?

The second question guiding the research of this case study examined the data from the perspective of the school. It was a reflective question that asked the researcher to determine what was learned about mitigating barriers to CLD parent involvement through the action research process. The action research process itself allowed for adjustments to be made to the interventions as new learning occurred; therefore this research question was addressed and evaluated throughout the course of the study. The action research team had to begin with acknowledging that as individuals, we hold biases based on our values. Keeping that in mind, the team moved forward in trying to openly examine and understand the data throughout the action research process. The study gave birth to a plethora of ideas on how to mitigate barriers, all of which could not possibly be implemented simultaneously. However, as these ideas are shared, and resources are gathered, my hope is that Cedar Cove ES and schools in similar situations can select the ideas that they feel will most benefit their school community and effectively implement them accordingly.

Once again, data from a variety of sources were collected to address the second research question. Data from the parent focus group, AR team meetings, and parent surveys were used

just as they were also used to address the first question. In addition, for this second question, parent feedback forms were also used as a data source. The following four themes emerged from the data:

1. Individual perceptions can impact communication; therefore, school personnel must strive to be accommodating and helpful, without being insulting or condescending.

2. Parent liaisons can serve as a way to connect CLD parents to school community.

3. Providing childcare for school functions and offering varied times for meetings or events can help more parents attend and feel more welcomed by the school.

4. Technology can help to disseminate information quickly, but many parents also benefit from information in paper form.

Theme 1: Accommodate Respectfully

Parent focus group. The parent focus group interview allowed for one parent to share her perspective on the school making attempts to send communications in Spanish for her to understand. Interestingly, Donna, recently moved here from Colombia, noted that although she appreciates any efforts made by the school to send home information in Spanish, she feels it's her responsibility to learn English because they've come to a country where English is the language spoken. She explained that you have to come and follow the same rules. She said, "It's just like when you're driving. You come, and you follow the same rules of driving."

This perspective was a learning moment for the research team. Although it was understood that this was the perspective of one, individual parent, and did not necessarily reflect the opinions of other CLD parents, it supported the idea that the school must be careful not to overcompensate for the barriers or limitations of some of our CLD parents.

AR team meetings. Throughout the research process, the AR team meetings addressed how we must be accommodating and attentive to the needs of our CLD parents, without making them feel inept or insulted. In our meetings, Tiffany Mendez was very open about her experiences as a Mexican immigrant who, although fluent in English, still speaks with an accent. She shared:

"One of the things that I think that we need to do everywhere is educate the people that are opening the doors for those people because there is different kinds of, I don't wanna say racism, but ways that people look at, for example, somebody like me. There's people that are just racist, period. But there's people that look at us like, "Oh, you're Mexican," kinda like, "Oh, you're disabled." Or, you know what I mean? And then they overcompensate. And it's like, "Why?" I have an accent, period. You know? And it's like you go to a level of extreme ...Don't treat me differently. And you know what I mean?... But I'm saying the people, when I come, people change. I walk in somewhere. I don't know how they wanna react as in, "Oh, here comes a Mexican," or "Oh, hi! You're a Mexican! I need to make sure that I treat you well." And there comes my husband, which white as they come. And it's just very normal. You know what I mean? So those are from the ground. We need to make sure that people know we're all the same."

This comment gave the team much to think about with providing cultural awareness and sensitivity training for the school staff. This is especially important for those who work in the front office and are usually the first individuals with whom our CLD parents come into contact. This topic continued to come up throughout the study as the team discussed different issues and concerns. Another team member also stated at one point, "People get offended when they water down things for them extremely." As a school, it is important to accommodate as necessary for

our CLD parents without making assumptions as to the extent of their needs. This requires a very open relationship with our families where they feel comfortable letting us know what accommodations work best for them.

Parent survey. The data from our parent surveys also supports that as a school, we cannot make assumptions about the needs of our parents. Results from the survey noted that only about 4% of our parents feel that the school does not send communication in a language they understand. In addition, only 6% indicated that they do not feel very comfortable asking questions. Although these opinions cannot and should not be discounted, it is a small percentage of our overall population. Therefore, again, we cannot assume that all parents who speak another language will benefit from the same level of accommodations or resources.

Another area in which the parent survey provided information about making appropriate accommodations was referenced through question number 8, "How often do you go to meetings at your child's school?" Results from this question showed that 88% of the parents do not frequent meetings often at the school. This reflects that the school must make more of an effort in ensuring that meetings are promoted and made accessible to all parents.

Theme 2: Parent Liaisons as CLD Parent Connections

The first intervention established by the action research team in this study was the recruitment of a group of parent liaisons. These individuals were parents of current students at Cedar Cove ES that represented the top cultures and languages spoken by school families as noted by the student registration system. The purpose of this group was to serve as a point of contact between CLD parents and the school. Our hope was for the liaisons to serve as interpreters at meetings, and be available to CLD parents in their cultural communities to answer

questions and also convey information. The team was able to obtain parent liaisons to represent our Chinese, Vietnamese, Hindi, Spanish, and Amharic speaking families.

AR team meetings. The AR team brought forth many ideas as to how the parent liaisons could benefit the school's CLD families. There were many discussions about how the parent liaisons could help to disseminate information and aid in spreading the word throughout their respective cultural communities about different events at the school. The team also acknowledged how the liaisons could possibly assist in parent-teacher communications if necessary. The team entertained the possibility of the liaisons interpreting for parent conferences as well, but the team acknowledged that this use of the liaisons could prove difficult due to concerns with confidentiality. Despite this concern, the team was adamant about the potential benefits to families through the incorporation of the parent liaisons. Leslie Swanson said:

> "But then if you've got your super buff, awesome liaison to call every now and
>
> then…And just be like, 'I just wanted to see if you had any questions, if everything's
>
> going okay.' 'Cause then they maybe say something that they wouldn't have otherwise.
>
> They would've been too afraid to call."

This intervention was viewed as a non-invasive way to provide support through a friendly contact. If the parent didn't have questions, then there would not be any pressure for them to interact further. Due to the fact that the coordination of the parent liaisons was at its inception and initial implementation, the AR team had limited data to evaluate the perceived benefit of the group from CLD parents at Cedar Cove Elementary School. However, the parent liaisons were introduced to parents at both Cedar Cove 101 meetings where they were present to serve as interpreters. In addition, one liaison was also used as an interpreter for the parent focus group interview.

Parent feedback forms. Parent feedback forms were used at both Cedar Cove 101

parent meetings in order to gain information from attending parents on what parts of the

meetings were beneficial. One of the questions on the form asked:

Was there anything additional being offered this evening that helped make it easier for

you to attend?

Parents could then mark if the presence of interpreters was one of the things that made it easier

for them to attend. 15 % of parents who filled out the forms from both meetings acknowledged

that the presence of interpreters made it easier for them to attend the sessions. Considering that

the sessions targeted CLD parents and parents new to the school, this data supports the fact that

the liaisons can help these parents feel more confident in attending parent meetings.

Theme 3: Childcare and Varied Meeting Times

Another lesson resulting from this research is the fact that the school must consider the

working parents needs when scheduling events. Again, many data sources were used to support

this finding that providing childcare for school functions and offering varied times for meetings

or events can help more parents attend and feel more welcomed by the school. However, this

theme, more than any other, emerged from parent comments noted in the researcher's journal as

well as the parent surveys.

Researcher's journal. The researcher's journal was a way for me to record my thoughts

and feelings throughout the case study. It was an especially useful way to record events and

conversations that perhaps were not discussed during AR team meetings. One particular incident

that supported the idea of offering varied times for meetings and other school events especially

to accommodate the working parents was the request made by a parent at our second Cedar Cove

101 parent meeting. This parent was a working parent and she was referencing the registration

process for our after school clubs known as Cub Clubs. Please note the entry from the researcher journal below:

> *One particular moment from the evening stood out as particularly eye opening…*
> *A parent raised her hand and stated that she felt that working parents were at a*
> *disadvantage because many times, by the time they got home from work and opened their*
> *child's folder and tried to register, many of the clubs were filled. She said may parents*
> *who are home when their children come home, have the advantage to register*
> *immediately, while working parents don't even have the opportunity to do so until several*
> *hours later.*
>
> *We discussed that she made a valid point, and that we would ask our bookkeeper*
> *who handles the registration details if it would be possible to open the registration*
> *window at 6:00 PM instead of 3:20 PM. We also agreed that we would ask the principal*
> *to notify parents through the Weekly Paws that registration would not open until 6:00*
> *PM – if we were able to make the change.*
>
> *This morning, our bookkeeper said that it was easy to change the time for*
> *registration, and our principal agreed to include the notification in the Weekly Paws.*
> *It felt so good to be able to make such a simple change in order to accommodate a large*
> *group of parents. It wasn't even something that we were doing to intentionally to*
> *alienate them, yet had it not been for this meeting, we would have continued with the*
> *same policy. This meeting gave us perspective about one small piece of our school's*
> *procedures and how we can easily be more inclusive and equitable for ALL parents*
> (Excerpt from Researcher's Journal, 2017).

The fact that something as minimal as the electronic registration times for after school clubs could be impacted by working parent schedules helped to serve as a reminder that as a school, we must consider how our daily decisions are equitable for all parents.

Parent surveys.   In addition to the researcher's journal, the parent surveys were instrumental in the development of this theme. Parents were provided an opportunity to make suggestions on what the school could help with in order to minimize challenges to parents being more actively involved in the school. Parents provided a wide array of ideas for the school to consider, but as previously noted childcare and work schedules were consistently mentioned. In fact 8 out of 38 responses for the fall surveys and 6 out of 29 responses in the spring noted some form of childcare request. This represented over 20 % of parents from both surveys. The childcare suggestions encompassed before school, after school, and childcare for meetings and events for the school.

Moreover, parents also specifically noted that meeting times in order to accommodate the working parents were needed. In fact again, 8 out of 38 responses for the fall surveys and 6 out of 29 responses in the spring noted some form of reference to PTA meetings, meetings with the principal, and school events needing to be varied to allow working parents to attend at times. This once again represents 1/5 our parents who completed the surveys. Therefore these two areas of concern made up 40% of the comments provided through the parent surveys.

Theme 4: Technology vs. Paper Information

During this study, many ideas were discussed on how to communicate upcoming information to parents. Although technology undoubtedly allowed for the research team to maximize the number of parents who were exposed to information in a rapid, efficient manner, it was also important to note that some parents still depended on letters and flyers to obtain

information. This finding was supported through multiple data sources from this research including AR team meetings, parent feedback forms, and parent surveys.

AR team meetings. The action research team spent copious amounts of time discussing the most effective ways to reach our CLD parents. We discussed the best ways to inform them about the parent surveys, the focus group interview, both Cedar Cove 101 parent meetings, and even about the school's Field Day. In almost all cases, the team opted to use both electronic as well as paper copies of information to ensure that we were reaching as many parents as possible. The team did not want to make assumptions about parent's internet access or usage as these decisions were made.

In the very first AR team meeting, Sue Ellen Smith noted that with big school events, paper copies needed to be used and translated. She said:

> "Paper copies on main events I think we need to make a different color or we need to get it out in several languages. Maybe not the whole Weekly Paws, but really things that will bring parents in, we need to. Focus on the main things and bring them in."

This comment then prompted Carol Kennedy to explain about her experience at another school when trying to communicate with parents. She said, "Our Hispanic parents didn't have computer access. We were trying to send everything out electronically." This conversation laid the foundation for ideas throughout the study because the team's discussion found a balance between electronic and paper communications. Each time we wanted to send out information, there was always an electronic version that was sent via email or through the principal's Weekly Paws, and then a paper flyer or announcement of some sort was sent home in every student's Friday Folder. It is important to note that other ideas were discussed in the AR team such as creating videos for parents to link on the school's webpage. We discussed this possibility for informational videos as

well as video recording of meetings in order for parents to view meetings they weren't able to attend.

Parent feedback forms. Another data source used for this theme was the parent feedback forms used during the Cedar Cove 101 parent meetings. On the form, parents were asked to note how they heard about the meeting. The purpose of including the question on the form was to gain insight as to which resources our CLD parents were using to gain information from the school. This was the very first question on the form:

How did you hear about this meeting?

_____*Weekly Paws*

_____*English flyer in my child's Friday Folder*

_____*Flyer in my language in my child's Friday Folder*

_____ *From another parent*

For the first meeting, 84% of the parents who completed the form selected the second option of, "English flyer in my child's Friday Folder." This information was extremely helpful in noting that more parents were taking the time to read their child's folder as opposed to the weekly electronic newsletter. For the second meeting, there was much closer split in that 50% of the parents noted that they heard about the meeting form the flyer and 40% from the Weekly Paws. However, this still showed a majority of parents relying on the paper copies being sent home in the weekly student folders.

Parent surveys. The parent surveys also provided information about methods of communication that would help parents feel more informed. In fact, several parents provided comments on how to make meetings more accessible. One parent wrote:

Scheduling is always difficult because with so many people someone will have a conflict. Would be possible to use a webinar service that would allow parents to remote access to meetings or even view a meeting after it was held? For example, I'm going to be out of town on curriculum night. But I could attend it if a webinar it was available. Also, a webinar could be translated into different languages with close-caption subtitles and given to parents who's first language is not English.

This suggestion was something that with today's technology could be very feasible. The AR team noted that this was an additional way to bring in parents who want to participate, but for some reason, can't. The fact that the subtitles can be used and that the session can be recorded and archived also makes another resource to reach parents.

Summary of Findings Relative to Research Purpose

The purpose of this study was to increase levels of CLD parental involvement. The AR team used the two research questions from this study to guide the interventions implemented. Then throughout the action research process, the team observed the interventions' effectiveness through the analysis of the data generated. Both qualitative and quantitative data were used to inform the work of the team. Action research team meeting transcripts, the focus group interview transcript, and the researcher's journal provided significant qualitative data while parent surveys and parent feedback forms provided both quantitative and qualitative data.

The team agreed that, after a thorough analysis of the data, determining one, single definition of parent involvement can be a difficult task when incorporating the beliefs and perspectives of a variety of group of people who all have different individual and collective cultural experiences. It was also found that communication is a key component in understanding and increasing levels of involvement. Levels of communication can vary based on parental

beliefs and experiences; therefore the responsibility of the school is to inform parents to the best of their ability. The data also showed that parents do feel that there are barriers that keep them from becoming more involved and the schools can do many things to try and alleviate some of those barriers in order to help extend and promote a welcoming atmosphere of trust with the community.

These findings align with Bourdieu's Theory of cultural capital used as a part of the theoretical framework for this study. As mentioned in Chapter two, Bourdieu (1967) contends that people use their cultural resources and social networks to navigate through their social contexts. Because this study found that CLD parents define involvement based on their individual cultural experiences and understandings, it supports Bourdieu's argument. Parents in this study all had diverse perspectives which impacted their understanding and in turn, their involvement, in the school. In addition, the notion of barriers further documents how many CLD families lack the cultural resources to fully navigate the educational system.

The findings also align with the second theory used to frame this study: Funds of Knowledge (Moll et al., 1992). The action research team in this study found that schools must reach out to CLD parents in a supportive manner without insinuating that CLD families are in some way inferior. The study found that diversity training can help benefit the school so that the school can view CLD parents as true partners, and not just a group that must be catered to in order to be in compliance of some sort.

The team agrees that the school is just beginning the process of reaching out to CLD parents, as there are many ideas that were not yet coordinated and implemented during this research study. However, the study found that within the school there are always individuals who believe in this work and are willing to work collaboratively to help improve the school-

family relationship of our community. It is important to note that due to the use of the action research process, these interventions and others can be easily replicated at similar schools. Therefore, the team feels strongly that the school administration should be privy to the findings of this study in order to continue on in the work at Cedar Cove Elementary School as well as to help guide the work in similar schools who feel that this effort is also needed.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

It was previously noted that the purpose of this case study was to increase the levels of culturally

and linguistically diverse parent involvement at a diverse, predominantly middle class, high

performing elementary school in a large, urban district. The two questions that the study sought

to answer were: (1) in which ways do cultural and linguistic diversity affect how parents define

parental involvement? How does that definition affect the way parents engage with the school?,

and (2) what is learned about alleviating barriers to CLD parent involvement through the action

research process? The information in this chapter provides an overall analysis of the study, the

conclusions drawn from the data collected, and the implications suggested from the findings for

future research and educational practices.

Summary of Findings

The research questions guided the work of the action Research team in this study, and the

action research process allowed for interventions to be implemented, evaluated, and analyzed in

order to better understand how to increase the involvement of the CLD parents and families at

Cedar Cove Elementary School. Although Cedar Cove enjoys high levels of parent involvement

and benefits from a very active Parent Teacher Association (PTA), it was discovered that the

majority of the most active volunteers seemed to be the same core group of parents. When

investigated further, it was discovered that the demographics of the most active parents did not

reflect the overall demographics of the school. Therefore the AR team in this study worked to

find ways to reach out to our CLD families and encourage them to become more involved in the school community.

The AR team created three interventions from which data was collected and analyzed in order to evaluate their success. The first intervention was the recruitment of a group of current Cedar Cove parents who were willing to serve as parent liaisons for the top five cultural and linguistic communities represented by the school's population. Liaisons were recruited for the Chinese, Amharic, Hindi, Vietnamese, and Spanish speaking communities in order to help CLD parents feel more welcomed and connected to the school community. In addition to this intervention, two parent meetings called, "Cedar Cove 101" took place as a forum to provide more information to CLD parents in a welcoming environment.

The action research process generated a plethora of information from both qualitative and quantitative data sources in order to reach the study's findings. The team drew from meeting discussions, a focus group interview, parent survey information, and parent feedback form information in order to answer the research questions for this study. For the first question, it was found that due to the variety of personal beliefs, values, and experiences which are reflected through the diversity of Cedar Cove's parents, it was difficult to create one, single definition of parent involvement that would be representative of all diverse families. The team did find that communication between parents and the school was a key component in parents' understanding of involvement. However, varying parent perceptions based on personal experiences with schools, combined with lack of knowledge or understanding about the current school setting can impact what parents understand to be acceptable levels of communication. The team also noted that many times, parents have perceived barriers which keep them from being more involved. In many cases, the team found specifically, that language barriers proved to be very difficult for

parents to overcome. Finally, a lack of understanding about acceptable interactions with our

local school system was also found to inhibit more parents from interacting with the school.

Data from this study also provided copious amounts of data to inform the second research

question. The AR team agreed upon findings which noted several ideas for schools to help

mitigate some of the perceived barriers to CLD parent involvement in schools. To begin, the

team found that because perceptions can vary based on culture, beliefs, experiences, etc., the

school must attempt to accommodate and welcome CLD families in a respectful manner. It is

possible for parents to be insulted if they do not need the help that is being offered when the

school repeatedly or forcefully insists that they consider it. Schools must offer options, but allow

parents to make the decision as to whether the support is something that will be beneficial to

them.

In addition, the team also found that parent liaisons are a very non-threatening way to

help increase the sense of school-family-community. The parents serving as liaisons feel that

they are contributing to the school, while parents who interact with the liaisons feel welcomed

and comfortable in communicating with that particular school representative. The liaisons can

serve as interpreters, reach out to other parents in their cultural community to promote school

events, create informational videos in their native languages, and make welcoming calls to new

families in the school. The existence for this type of group within a school can lead to a myriad

of opportunities and services depending on the needs of the school and the parents.

Next, the team found that providing childcare for school meetings and functions as well

as offering a variety of times for those events at the school can help to accommodate the needs of

many parents. Schools can easily continue to do things in a certain manner simply because they

had been done that way previously. It is important for schools to think about how small changes

such as the times and dates for meetings and childcare support can help for a greater percentage

of parents in the school community to not only attend, but also feel more welcomed by the

school's attempt to accommodate their needs.

Finally, the AR team found that communicating information to parents in an era of technology

has both benefits and concerns. There is no doubt that sending mass emails to parents for weekly

communications or special messages from the school reaches a majority of parents in a timely,

effective manner. However, in a time where many families are so electronically connected, it is

easy to grow complacent about actually reading and acting upon the information being sent.

Data from this study showed that in addition to technological communications, many parents still

benefit from and actively appreciate the tangible, paper notification or flyer from the school.

Conclusions

The team was able to draw several conclusions from the action research process in this

case study. These were based on the study's purpose and research questions as they pertained to

the study's conceptual framework.

Conclusion 1: School Staff Must Examine Their Own, Personal Biases Before Attempting
to Understand the Perceptions of Others.

At the beginning of this study, the AR team reflected upon the purpose of the study and

how it was important to honor our beliefs and values throughout the research process. In the

same way, the team also emphasized the importance of examining personal biases and

acknowledging how those beliefs and biases influenced the decisions we made as a school. In

our first AR team meeting, I said,

> "We all have biases. We all come in with our value system. And to say that we don't is
>
> just wrong because we all do. Every person does based on how they've grown up. But if

we acknowledge 'em and …know that they're there and… you try to be as objective as

you can."

The team discussed the idea that if it was difficult for us to separate ourselves from our beliefs

and those experiences to which we were accustomed, then it is important to understand how

difficult it may be for our CLD parents and families as well. When asking parents to interact in

an environment that may or may not be within their understanding or level of comfort, educators

should understand as opposed to making rash judgments that can lead to negative perceptions.

This understanding is imperative when reaching out to an alienated or marginalized group to

avoid the fostering of deficit beliefs. As explained by DeCastro-Ambrosetti and Cho (2005),

deficit attitudes and judgments can have a negative impact on the school-family relationship.

Conclusion 2: Cultural Assumptions Sometimes Provide Perspective When Making

Decisions for Diverse Populations.

The data from this study showed that cultural assumptions are made frequently when

making decisions for diverse populations. These assumptions are many times framed in a very

positive manner, as opposed to being viewed in a negative light. Even within our AR team

discussions, members made comments that demonstrate assumptions created based on

information from personal interactions. For example, in a meeting where the team was trying to

determine if an RSVP option should be placed on the invitation for the Cedar Cove 101 parent

meeting there was some debate as to whether this something that needed to be done. Some team

members like Veronica said, "I think it's better to RSVP." Then I went on to say,

"Here's another thing I'm just going to say culturally. I'm just going to throw it out there

for my culture. We never RSVP and we just show up. Cubans are -- I will say it! We just

don't -- because it's not part of our culture. You invite, people come. It's just expected

they're going to show up so they're not going to feel the need to let you know they're

coming. 'Well you invited me; you know I'm supposed to come.' "

This prompted conversation about whether some of our diverse families even understood what

the term RSVP meant. The team decided not to ask for participants to RSVP, but it was based

on the assumption that many diverse cultures felt the way I described through my comment.

This assumption was not good or bad, but merely a way to present a perspective for the team to

entertain as they made a decision.

During another meeting, the team was trying to think of possible parents they knew who

may have been willing to participate in the focus group interview for the study. I had noted that I

had a few volunteers from a variety of places, but that I wanted to get a few more, in order to

have a variety of perspectives. Then Sue Ellen Smith mentioned,

"I'm going to talk to my neighbor because he always have questions. And maybe this

might be something that he'll do. He always asks questions. His son is in fourth grade,

but they are from India, and that population always have question as to, even if they like

it, they always ask, "Why do we do it?"

The discussion led her to explain that she admired that about this culture because they always

wanted to understand the rationale as to why things were done in that particular manner. This

demonstrated that although Sue Ellen's comment was a cultural assumption about an entire

group based on her experience with one neighboring family, it was provided in a positive light to

help provide options for the problem that the team was attempting to address. Although there is

literature to note that deficit or negative attitudes and assumptions can cause barriers to a positive

home-school relationships (DeCastro-Ambrosetti and Cho, 2005; Nelson & Guerra, 2014), this

study supports the idea that assumptions can also be brought forth with positive intentions in order to ensure that CLD families are being considered in decisions for the school.

Conclusion 3: Celebrating Culture can Help CLD Families Feel Welcomed as a Part of the School Community.

The action research concluded that formal and informal celebrations of culture can help to make CLD families feel welcomed as a part of the school community. During the focus group interview, I asked the participants what they felt the school could do to make CLD families feel more connected with the school. One parent, Sally, said:

"I think being open to their other cultures and being open to learn about their cultures, their food ... The beauty of International Night and being the chair of that group was I got to break bread with so many different cultures. And just eating with those families and ... Because some of the families that we had to kind of convince. 'Come on. You gotta share your country,' and just by our family spending time with them, now, we have friendships, and my kids have friendships, with a Mexican family. And we have eaten real Mexican food, like, not La Frontera. We have friends that are Indians that invite us to spend Festival of Light with them. And we eat all of their Indian food. I mean, it's been such an amazing experience to ... When they realize you wanna learn about their culture, they want you to experience it with them and enjoy their food and enjoy their party. So I think that's the biggest thing, is just saying, 'We wanna learn about your culture. We wanna learn about your traditions.' "

This comment prompted much discussion and then another participant, Enrique noted that his friend's son attends another school in the district where they have different nights throughout the year to learn about different countries represented at the school. This also led for the group to mention that although Cedar Cove has an International Night once a year; it would be nice for

more acknowledgements throughout the year to happen on a smaller scale within individual

classrooms. At the end of the conversation, Donna mentioned that she is grateful for the

experience her son has at Cedar Cove. She further explained,

> "It's the advantage of learning more. In Colombia, my son, he's only going to school with
>
> Colombians. Here, he has the opportunity to learn and to go to school with students from
>
> a lot of different cultures. And we all can learn from each other."

The school can work to demonstrate their sincerity about celebrating the diversity in

small ways, but the validation it brings to our CLD families of the importance of their cultures,

can strengthen the school-family relationship. This conclusion directly connects to the theoretical

framework of the study as it relates to Funds of Knowledge (Moll et al., 1992).

Conclusion 4: Involvement Promotes Empowerment

The CLD parents at Cedar Cove were solicited for their opinions throughout this action

research case study. The research team wanted to understand if these parents felt welcomed and

heard at the school. The parent surveys provided information about communication, meeting

attendance and school responsiveness. It also specifically asked the following question:

> *In the past year, how involved have you been in providing input about school decisions to*
>
> *the school leaders?*

In August, 38% of parents who responded to the survey marked that they almost never provided

input about school decisions while 28% marked that they only did this once or twice a year. For

the second set of surveys, 41% of parents responded that they almost never provided input to

school leaders, while the same 28% of parents stated they did so once or twice a year. This

means that a majority of our parents were still not involved in providing input to leaders about

decisions in the school on any sort of frequent basis, if at all.

Despite this, the team did find data to support that when parents are provided information and are made to feel welcome, they are more prone to becoming involved. On the parent feedback forms that were provided at both Cedar Cove 101 meetings, parents were asked if the topics covered were helpful in increasing their awareness and understanding. 100% of parents at both meetings replied that the topics were indeed helpful. The next question on the feedback form asked:

> *Will the information provided in this session help you to become more involved at Cedar*
>
> *Cove Elementary School?*

For the first meeting, 79% of parents answered that yes, this would help increase their involvement. At the second meeting, 60% of parents said yes. This data supports, that the more information and communication is provided to parents, the more comfortable they will feel to become active in the school community. It therefore stands to reason that as their involvement increases, so will their willingness to provide input about school decisions. According to Nelson & Guerra (2010):

> With empowerment, parents and families are not responding to needs identified by the
>
> school. Rather, parents and families work as full partners with the school to create a
>
> school that is responsive to the assets and needs of students and families in the
>
> community.

The AR team at Cedar Cove concluded that our CLD parents must be involved in order to be empowered. In fact in one of our AR team meetings Carol Kennedy was talking about how she really wanted the parent liaisons she recruited to feel comfortable in their role, especially during the parent meeting where they were being asked to interpret. She stated, "And to me that's going

to be the real key thing, that they feel good, they feel empowered." Involvement is crucial to

CLD parent empowerment. One cannot expect empowerment without involvement.

Conclusion 5: Increasing CLD Parent Involvement can be a Slow Process of Change in

Order to be a Sustainable Endeavor.

Change is many times a slow process that requires planning, commitment, and a level of

readiness from those involved in the process. Cedar Cove's demographic shift did not happen

from one day to the next. It was an incremental change over the course of a decade.

Undoubtedly, the process of changing practices within the school in order to ensure the active

solicitation of involvement from CLD families will also take time to reach its full potential. For

the purposes of this case study, three interventions were implemented as purposeful interventions

that could be easily implemented over a brief time with the efforts of a small team of individuals.

With the success of these interventions, now the school can look to not only continue with these

interventions in the future, but also work towards expanding efforts to other interventions

involving more of the school community as well.

The study at Cedar Cove made an impact on parents who attended the informational

meetings as well as the parents who participated in the focus group and served in the role of a

parent liaison. The school can now look to those parents to help offer opinions and support to

any efforts made by the school to increase CLD parent involvement as time moves forward.

After the second set of surveys had been sent out and completed, a parent stopped to talk to me

one day in the hallway at school. She told me that she felt the work I was doing was so

important because her family had come over from the United Kingdom, and even though there

was no language barrier, there were many things about the school system that were different and

she did not understand. She said her family currently works with refugees, and she has spent

much time talking about school with families from different cultures. She requested to sit with me before the end of the school year in order to share with me what she had learned from the many immigrant families that she has worked with over the last few years. One comment she made directly validated that the work begun by this research study was necessary. It is described in my researcher journal entry below:

> *I was surprised to hear this very active parent, who happened to be White and a member of the PTA, tell me what she did. She said, "I hate to say it but many of our White parents don't take the time to explain or share things because they assume that everyone understands the system and knows how things work. I think we need to help them see that we have to be more inclusive because not everyone understands." She then continued by offering to help in any way she could. Her words made me see that there are more people within our community who care about these efforts and who are willing to help if we just let them know what we need.*

This encounter demonstrates the importance of taking small, practical steps towards mitigating CLD parent barriers to involvement because it can lead to an increased awareness which, in turn, can prompt support for changes on a larger scale.

<p style="text-align:center">Discussion</p>

Implications

The action research from this case study directly related to the problem at Cedar Cove Elementary School. For that reason, it may be difficult to generalize the results from this study to the broader educational setting. In addition, implications for further research are also limited. However, there are implications that should be noted, and the study did provide a catalyst for

Cedar Cove ES to review its practices in order to make the school more accessible and welcoming to CLD parents and families in the school community.

For the action research team. The research from this case study yielded several implications for the school. To begin, the action research team members now have a deeper understanding and awareness of the types of barriers facing our CLD parents. This increased awareness can provide the teachers with more understanding of how to better communicate with the CLD families of their individual students as well as their neighbors and colleagues in the communities in which they work and live. The AR team members can now serve as a voice amongst their colleagues that can provide perspective based on their learning from participating in this study.

In addition to an increased awareness, the members of the team are now well versed in the action research process itself. They have the experience of implementing interventions and observing and analyzing their effectiveness to determine the next steps. This process is easily replicated over and over in any school setting whether they are a member of a large team implemented school-wide intervention, or whether each member implements interventions in their individual classroom or work settings.

For the school. This case study at Cedar Cove Elementary School has also rendered implications for decision making teams at the school. This could include administrators and teacher leaders, but it also encompasses teachers, clerks, and any school staff that engages with our CLD parents in any way. The findings from this study suggest that there is a portion of our CLD parent population that is not engaged for various reasons. It is our responsibility as a school to increase the awareness of this problem and help the staff feel comfortable in ways to embrace these parents as contributing members of our school community.

The leaders of the school must consider cultural awareness training for the staff as a means to address this problem. This type of training can help to provide a base for understanding the need for further interventions and each staff member's ability to help with this process through their individual role within the school. In addition, communication processes should be examined to ensure that information is sent in a timely and organized fashion, and that efforts are made to send it in a variety of languages spoken by the school's families whenever possible.

For the district. The implications for the school district from this study are significant. To commence, the district should consider providing extensive cultural awareness and sensitivity training for its school leaders in order to ensure that schools are not alienating marginalized groups within their communities. Cedar Cove is situated in a very large, urban, district in the southeastern part of the United States, with over 130 schools serving over 175,000 students. With well-trained leaders, the schools are then able to examine the needs of each individual school and determine which interventions would be most suited based on their school community needs.

The district should further examine that although some schools may have a parent coordinator on staff due to their qualification of the Federal Title I status, other schools like Cedar Cove do not receive extra financial support for their efforts in engaging their CLD parent communities. Therefore, the district should be prepared to offer support through resources, financial or otherwise, to help the non-Title I schools with this effort. During the course of this study, the district would not allow Cedar Cove to borrow interpretation microphones for our parent meetings because it was being used for the purposes of the research study. However, it is

important to note that the efforts of the study were to improve a real problem within a school in its district. This should also be considered by the district when resources are requested.

For national educational reforms. As previously stated, because this case study took place at Cedar Cove Elementary School which has a unique demographic population, generalizations of these findings may not be applicable to broader educational contexts. However, this study does have implications for consideration on a national educational level. The study showed that schools should examine the needs of their local communities and solicit the input and opinions of the affected groups before implementing interventions that may not provide what the community needs. This case study asked parents for their input, and then amended their interventions to include what the parents said they needed the most. In schools across the nation, districts are implementing new curriculums and programs on a continual basis with the hopes that it will make a positive impact on the students and communities they serve. However, many times, states, districts, and schools, begin implementation of these interventions prior to a thorough assessment of what is needed. Furthermore, it should be considered that what is appropriate in one setting, may not be appropriate in another; therefore making decisions to implement programs without soliciting feedback is not recommended, nor is it a wise investment of resources.

For the researcher. My role as both researcher and assistant principal during this study allowed for me to easily access information and data about the school, students, and parents of Cedar Cove. In addition, my leadership role within the school allowed me to access the principal easily in order to obtain permission for meeting dates and locations as well as to send out school-wide emails and messages to our community. This certainly aided with the logistical parts of the study being handled easily to facilitate the implementation of the interventions.

As this action research study concluded, I understood that my role as an assistant principal at Cedar Cove Elementary School was forever changed. No longer am I able to be complacent about the fact that we have a very involved community. It may be true that in comparison to other schools, our school enjoys a generous amount of support from our school community. However, now that the data from this study showed there is a portion of the population that is not engaged to the maximum potential, it is my responsibility to continually seek ways to improve the way in which we as a school engage with our CLD parents and families.

My responsibility is to bring awareness and bring understanding between parents, teachers, and students so that the educational experiences of the students we serve are enriched. It is to be the unspoken voice of the parent with the language barrier or the advocate for the parent who is being criticized for not attending a conference. It is my responsibility to promote appreciation and curiosity as opposed to judgment and stereotypes. This may be a lengthy endeavor, but it can be accomplished one teacher at a time, one student at time, and one parent at a time.

For future research. This case study was limited to Cedar Cove Elementary School. Although the school is large, less than 20% of parents participated in providing their thoughts through the parent surveys. In addition, approximately 30 total parent feedback forms were collected from both parent meetings. Lastly, there were five participating parents in the focus group. The small sample size does not negate or discredit the finding from this study, but it does suggest that other studies of this nature are needed to inform the literature. This study did not collect or generate socioeconomic data, thus more examination and exploration as to how socioeconomics may influence the parent involvement dynamics at similar schools would also be

beneficial. Specifically, studies targeting CLD parent involvement in high performing, predominantly middle class, urban elementary schools are needed to understand the unique dynamics of schools like Cedar Cove.

Conclusion

This action research case study brought forth awareness to a problem that was easily overlooked due to the overall climate and setting of the school. Cedar Cove Elementary School was a place where parents were visible throughout the day for a variety of reasons. The teachers felt the presence of the PTA each year as they received their $100.00 for classroom supply expenses, and as they created lessons to incorporate the classroom laptops they each have courtesy of PTA funds. Every Arts in Education program (one for each grade level) sponsored through the PTA also served as a reminder of how supportive our school community is for the benefit of our over 1,300 students.

The research process for this study promoted the idea that it is our responsibility to reach out to all of our parents, and not just the ones who serve as our room parents, or the ones who send us the most emails. As educators, creating a welcoming environment in our classrooms is second nature, but extending that welcome to the parents so that they feel a part of our overall school community is at times, more difficult to accomplish. The data from this study verified that there are still parents who are not as involved in the school as much as they would like for a myriad of reasons. Our role as a school is to attempt to mitigate those barriers to the best of our ability in order to create a trusting and welcoming relationship with our school community.

Schools must be prepared that there will be sect of the community that is very satisfied with the existing systems and processes because it has worked for them for so long. This means

that school leaders should be prepared to handle a few disgruntled community members

throughout this process. As Carol Kennedy noted in one the AR team meetings:

> "You brought up somethin', true statement, that's really important. No matter how much
>
> you do this, there's gonna be a backlash ... from parents and from teachers and I think
>
> probably somethin' through the county, which they need to do is a training about
>
> accepting diversity for even a teacher day for an hour or two."

In the midst of the parents who may be upset, school leaders must keep in mind that the schools

are intended to support all students and families, not just a select group. Public schools help

every child achieve; they don't pick and choose. If one of your core values as a school, district,

system, etc., promotes the success of each and every student, then justification for these efforts is

undisputable.

This action research case study did find that parents are appreciative of the school's

efforts to support them as parents in our school. With such a wide array of needs depending on

individual situations, it is quite difficult to suggest one, specific idea that would address all

needs. Increasing involvement for CLD parents is a process. It is a series of varied interventions

in order to maximize support for a large group of people with unique needs. Some will be better

received than others, and interventions on a large scale require planning, organization, and

funding.

One of the study's limitations was the small sample. Only five parents participated in the

focus group interviews and less than 20% of Cedar Cove parents completed the parent surveys.

In addition, only about 30 parent feedback forms were collected from both parent meetings.

Although the small sample did allow for more intimate, personal conversations and opinions to

be collected, it is unclear if the majority of the data collected from the surveys and the feedback

forms were the opinions of the most alienated group that the study was targeting. In other words, because the surveys were sent out to all parents, were the parents completing the surveys the CLD parents whom we were trying find out the most about?

When analyzing demographics of which parents completed the surveys, results were consistent for both surveys. In the first survey, only 9% of responses were from Hispanic parents. In addition, 24% of responses were from Black parents, 13% were from Asian parents, and 2% came from multiracial parents (2 of which also identified as Hispanic). This meant that 57% of the responses provided were from White parents. Of those white parents, 32% did report speaking another language other than English in the home. Demographic results from the second survey were similar. However, there was an increase form 9% to 23% Hispanic parent response. The Asian response also increased from 13% to 19% while the black responses decreased slightly from 24 to 21%. Finally the white percentage of responses also decreased for the second survey going from 57% to 53%. This change for the second survey shows a small positive impact on diverse responses at Cedar Cove after interventions were implemented. However, it is difficult to determine if the diverse opinions obtained in the data are truly of the most marginalized parents within the school.

Ultimately, this study did provide the school with a means of obtaining a series of ideas to promote involvement among CLD parents at Cedar Cove Elementary School. In addition, the AR team members, as veterans of the action research process, can help lead the school in larger efforts as necessary. These individuals are committed to the work that was begun by this research study and will be instrumental in moving the school forward in its efforts.

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APPENDIX A

EMPIRICAL TABLE

Author(s), Date	Title	Purpose	Method	Sample	Result(s)	Conclusion(s)	Implication(s)
Cucchiara, M. B., & Horvat, E. M. (2009).	Perils and promises: Middle-class parental involvement in urban schools.	To explore the topic of middle class parent involvement in urban schools. Specifically, the study questions why and with what consequences do middle class parents send their students to urban schools.	Comparative qualitative case studies of 2 urban elementary schools in the downtown area of a large northeastern city. The study included 59 interviews and 225 hours of participant observation.	School community members who were diverse in race, ethnicity, social class, levels of involvement and geographic area of residence. Most interviewees were parents, but also consisted of teachers, principals of both schools, and system administrators.	Middle class parents were successful in bringing in new resources and programs to the school. However, some parents held a collective view about involvement and thus their actions benefitted the school as a whole. Other parents held a more individualistic view about helping their particular child, and this view negatively impacted low income and minority students and families in the school.	Middle class parents were rich in social and cultural capital used to influence decision making and resources. The benefit for all students in the school or merely the select middle class children depended on the goals and intentions of the parents with their involvement in the school.	Middle class parent involvement through an individualistic lens can actually have a negative impact on some student and their families. It is suggested that involvement be encouraged with a "collective" perspective so that that middle class parental involvement benefits all students regardless of social class.

Author(s), Date	Title	Purpose	Method	Sample	Result(s)	Conclusion(s)	Implication(s)
DeCastro-Ambrosetti, D., & Cho, G. (2005)	Do parents value education? Teachers' perceptions of minority parents.	To offer research about parent involvement at the secondary level. This study explored secondary preservice and inservice teachers' perceptions of diverse cultural groups and the value these parents place on education.	Participants completed an anonymous attitudinal survey. This survey was theoretically based on the work of multicultural researchers. The survey consisted of 17 demographic questions and 20 items answered on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Additional open-ended questions were asked. Using a qualitative analysis procedure (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), the open-ended	Researchers selected 160 pre-service and in-service teachers enrolled in courses in a teacher credentialing program that had cultural diversity concepts embedded within the curricula. 91 (57%) were female and 69 (43%) were male. The ethnic distribution of the respondents was 59% majority and 41% minority ethnic groups.	The majority of participants indicated that their attitudes toward working with diverse student populations were positively influenced by taking these courses. These findings were reflected in both the qualitative and quantitative sections. However, the data also contained evidence of negative attitudes from preservice and in-service teachers toward parents of ethnic minority groups. The majority of the participants still exhibited negative perceptions toward the value ethnic minority parents place on education. They	Coursework that had cultural diversity concepts embedded within the curricula positively influenced many of the pre-service and in-service teachers' attitudes towards issues of diversity. However, some participants still felt ill equipped for teaching CLD students because of their limited exposure and interaction with them. Teachers continue to blame the home and family for CLD students' low academics. In order to initiate communication, both parents and	The researchers call for a revision in teacher education which incorporates field experiences that include community outreach programs with CLD populations, in addition to courses taken at the university level.

Author(s), Date	Title	Purpose	Method	Sample	Result(s)	Conclusion(s)	Implication(s)
			part of the survey was coded and categorized.		continued to believe that the home and the lack of value that parents place on education were responsible for their students' deficient academic achievement.	teachers must hold a healthy respect for each other. Assumptions should not be made by any party involved in the home-school partnership.	
Denessen, E., Bakker, J., & Gierveld, M. (2007)	Multi-Ethnic Schools' Parental Involvement Policies and Practices	To increase the researcher's knowledge of schools' perspectives and practices in dealing with diverse groups of parents. Also, to help school counseling agencies to develop programs for assisting multi-ethnic schools in improving their parent	Hour long interviews of each of the four principals. The interviews were audiotaped, transcribed, and coded by topic. Member checking was used for this process.	The principals of four multi-ethnic elementary schools in the Netherlands. The schools vary in their percentage of ethnic minority pupils, ranging from 20% to 100%. Among the four schools, two schools were public schools, one school was of Roman Catholic denomination, and one school was of a	All schools reported challenges in getting minority parents involved. There is limited parent-teacher contact and many attempts at invitations for parent events go unanswered. Language barriers and cultural differences are noted to be the biggest obstacles. All schools agreed that formal, written communication with minority parents was	There seems to be a lack of coordination of the policies and activities between schools. Schools differ in their view of the right balance between school and family culture.	There is a need to help schools formulate clear goals, concrete action plans, and evaluation of those actions regarding parental involvement. Schools could form communities of practice or communities of learners on the issue of parental involvement to share ideas and

Author(s), Date	Title	Purpose	Method	Sample	Result(s)	Conclusion(s)	Implication(s)
		involvement policies.		Protestant denomination.	not effective.		experiences.
Diamond, J. & Gomez, K. (2004).	African American Parents' Educational Orientations: The Importance of Social Class and Parents' Perceptions of Schools	To examine how social class shapes the educational orientations of actively engaged working-class and middle-class African American parents.	Qualitative study using observations of working-class and middle-class parents in their schools and communities as well as interviews.	Chicago public school African American middle class and working class parents. A snowball sampling technique was used to identify parents. Both sets of African American parents were selected because they self-identified or were identified by peers as being actively involved in their children's schools as school volunteers and decision-making team members. Parents from different social	Social class played a role in how involved parents became in choosing schools for their children. Middle-class African American parents were more active in the school choice process than their working-class counterparts. Working-class parents wanted high quality education for their children as well, but did not have the resources to pursue customized educational options. Findings also show that both working and middle-class parents were involved at the school level in a	Social class differences in how African American middle class parents approach educational participation result from the interplay between the educational environments they face, their resources for negotiating these environments, and prior race and social class–rooted family and schooling experiences.	Implications from this study include a review of school choice options. The researchers argue that these policies may increase the very inequalities that they are trying to eliminate. Instead, resources should be allocated to improve the qualities of the schools serving working-class African American students. Clarity in processes and procedures is also needed for parents to

Author(s), Date	Title	Purpose	Method	Sample	Result(s)	Conclusion(s)	Implication(s)
				class groups were defined by their self-identified employment statuses and educational backgrounds.	variety of capacities.		understand and be able to navigate through the institution.
Horvat, E.M, Weininger, E. B., & Lareau, A. (2003).	From Social Ties to Social Capital: Class differences in the relations between schools and parent networks.	To examine social class differences in the relationships between families and schools.	Qualitative study using Interviews and observations.	Third and fourth graders from three schools in both a Midwestern university community and a large, Northeastern city	Middle class families create social ties and networks through the organized activities of their children such as sports and dance classes as well as through informal contacts with educators and other professionals. Conversely, social networks for working-class and poor families were centered on family groups as opposed to peer groups or professionals.	Middle class families tend to pool together to convey their message on the school and collectively bring about change. However, working-class and poor parents dealt with issues individually on a case by case basis. The study also found that race did not influence social networks or the manner in which families handled problems	It is necessary for schools to attempt to reduce the disadvantage inadvertently placed on working-class and poor families through practices of the institution. Schools should openly communicate and provide resources to all families as much as possible, so that working-class and poor families can

Author(s), Date	Title	Purpose	Method	Sample	Result(s)	Conclusion(s)	Implication(s)
						in school as much as social class.	consider the school a place that can they can navigate to help with their child's needs.
Ingram, M., Wolfe, R., Lieberman, J., (2007).	The Role of Parents in High-Achieving Schools Serving Low-Income, At-Risk Populations	Construct a model of parent involvement that could reliably improve student achievement, even in schools considered at-risk because of high numbers of minority and/or impoverished students.	A descriptive study used survey methodology. The survey instrument used was a Family Involvement Questionnaire (Fantuzzo, Tighe, & Childs, 2000) that identified three family involvement dimensions as framed by Epstein's typologies: home-based involvement,	Three "at-risk" Chicago Public Schools identified as high performing based on the scores achieved on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT). Only schools scoring in the top third of the state on the ISAT were considered eligible for participation. More than 1,000 surveys were sent out to approximately 800 families at	Although two of the six typologies from Epstein's model (Parenting and Learning at Home) were very apparent in these schools, the other four typologies (Communicating, Volunteering, Decision Making, and Collaborating with the Community) did not seem to be in operation or linked to students' academic success.	Some research suggests that how parents interact with children at home has a greater effect on the child's performance in school than how parents interact with their children at school (Downey, 2002). Although that supports the overall findings of this study, more discussion on specific findings is warranted.	Results of this study suggest that teachers and schools should provide the information, resources and support to families to help extend the education of their children form the school into the home. In addition, schools should also seek to provide parenting trainings to help parents understand stages of

Author(s), Date	Title	Purpose	Method	Sample	Result(s)	Conclusion(s)	Implication(s)
			school-based involvement, and home-school conferencing.	the three schools.			development.
Jackson, K. & Remillard, J. T. (2005).	Rethinking Parent Involvement: African American Mothers Construct Their Roles in the Mathematics Education of Their Children	To examine how African American mothers from a low-income neighborhood conceptualized their roles in their children's mathematics learning.	Qualitative study using Interviews and observations.	mothers and grandmothers of children involved in an Educational Scholarship Program (ESP). 39 students were in the ESP in this cohort at Maple Elementary, with 33 in third grade and 6 in second grade. All were African American. Fifty-five percent of the ESP parents had finished high school, and 3 had bachelor's degrees	Results found parents to be involved in their children's education in a variety of ways. Yet, the forms that their involvement took were not typically recognized as "parent involvement," particularly when articulated by those working in schools. parents work to structure, foster, and support their children's learning in a variety of contexts, not just those that are related to school. They took active roles in supporting	Traditional understandings of parent involvement may overlook ways that low-income parents deliberately involve themselves in their children's education. It is important to examine the ways parents are intellectual and educational resources for their children beyond the boundaries of schools.	In addition to acting as advocates for their children in school, parents actively created opportunities for their children to learn mathematics in everyday, realistic situations. Further research is needed to understand the knowledge parents draw on in undertaking this work and to consider ways that this work

Author(s), Date	Title	Purpose	Method	Sample	Result(s)	Conclusion(s)	Implication(s)
					their children's progress in school. Also, parents have an active presence in the school through volunteering and attending school functions.		can be supported within schools. For schools, taking a broad, parentcentric view of parent involvement can have multiple benefits for school practices.
Lee, J., & Bowen, N. K. (2006).	Parent involvement, cultural capital, and the achievement gap among elementary school children.	To study the level and impact of parental involvement on elementary school children's academic achievement by race/ethnicity, poverty, and parent educational attainment.	A parent consent information packet was provided to participants. Analysis included three demographic variables that have been shown to be predictive of school performance: race/ethnicity, participation in the free	415 children from a representative sample of 497 third through fifth graders in a community bordering a major urban center in the southeastern United States who completed the Elementary School Success Profile. 34% were Black, 51% White, and 15% Latino. 40% qualified for free	Levels of parental involvement and child achievement varied significantly across demographic groups. White students showed significantly higher achievement, although black student achieved higher than Hispanic students. In addition, students with higher socioeconomics and higher levels of parental educational attainment outscored	The academic achievement gap was partially explained by differences in the levels and effects of parent involvement and the interaction between parent involvement and other demographic backgrounds. Parents in all groups were willing and able to make time to support their	Continued study of how social status may moderate the effects of different types of parent involvement is needed. Multiple demographic groups and the different types of involvement need more examination. Identifying and reducing barriers among African

Author(s), Date	Title	Purpose	Method	Sample	Result(s)	Conclusion(s)	Implication(s)
			or reduced-price school lunch program, and parent educational attainment. Chi-square statistics and t tests were used to examine differences in parent involvement and school performance by demographic characteristics.	or reduced lunch. The average parent educational attainment corresponded to a level between "some college or vocational training" and "completed a 2-year degree."	students who did not.	children's education at home, but the emphasis of their efforts may have differed on the basis of experience. Parents' higher educational expectations for their children were associated with higher academic achievement across the demographic groups assessed. The same high level of educational expectations in poor and nonpoor families was associated with lower achievement among school	American, Latino/Hispanic, low-income, and less educated parents should be an emphasis of strategies to engage parents at school in their children's education.

Author(s), Date	Title	Purpose	Method	Sample	Result(s)	Conclusion(s)	Implication(s)
						lunch program participants than among nonparticipants. This difference may reflect generally lower levels of human, cultural, and social capital in lower income homes.	
Levine-Rasky, C. (2009).	Dynamics of parent involvement at a multicultural school.	To investigate how middle-class parents exercise influence and form positive relationships at the neighborhood public school that serves various ethno-cultural groups of students.	Qualitative personal interviews. Interviews were about two hours in duration and were conducted in the participants' homes. The data were transcribed and coded using a qualitative	25 personal interviews with parents; of these, 20 were from the majority population; two were men. Nineteen of the majority participants were members of the white, (secular) Jewish group of high socio-economic status,	63% of Baywood mothers were involved. They built effective relationships with the school for the benefit of both their children and the school. However, the Kerrydale mothers saw the purpose of communicating with teachers is to solve particular problems affecting one's child. The Baywood	Baywood moms demonstrated exclusionary practices of Kerrydale moms (middle class vs. working class, as well as ethnic and immigrant status differences.)	Despite the similarities in experiences of cultural experiences and histories, socioeconomics seemed to perpetuate exclusionary practices. More studies are needed to help explain how ethnicity, the practice of

Author(s), Date	Title	Purpose	Method	Sample	Result(s)	Conclusion(s)	Implication(s)
			software program and were analyzed with a 'data-oriented' method Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000).	ages 41–50; 16 participants were married. Eleven worked full-time in professional occupations or in business, five worked part-time, and three were homemakers.	mothers did not reach out to include or correct this assumption by the minority group.		middle-classness, and exclusion of power are all connected.
Lopez, G.R. (2001).	The value of hard work: Lessons o parent involvement from an (Im)migrant household.	To illustrate how parent involvement can be shown in ways that fall outside of the traditional school related models.	Qualitative research methodology using observations and interviews.	Purposeful sample of five immigrant families living in the Texas Rio Grande Valley recommended by school personnel.	For this family, the perception of involvement was to show their children the value of their education through the medium of hard work.	Despite the parents' lack of formal involvement in the school all children had great successes in school.	Schools need to establish new ways to effectively promote success for all students taking into account the non-traditional views to be involved in children's education.
Marx. S. (2008)	Not blending In: Latino students in a predominantly white	To examine the school environment of a majority white school in a western state	Ethnographic and survey research methods: surveys of students,	49% of the faculty (26 adults) of the school participated (all were white except the 1 Latino	White students answered more positively than Latinos for every question. Latino students felt less	Latino students had a general dissatisfaction with their school, a lack of connection with	The experiences of the one Latino teacher also support the need for recruitment of teachers of

Author(s), Date	Title	Purpose	Method	Sample	Result(s)	Conclusion(s)	Implication(s)
	School	through the perspectives of Latino students, white students, and teachers and administrators.	faculty, and administrators. Also qualitative observations and interviews of the one Latino teacher as well.	teacher). 800 students also turned in surveys which accounted for 78% of the student population. School is located on the outskirts of a small town in a less populous western state.	welcomed than white students at the school and liked their teachers and school less The teachers were consistent in their belief Latinos needed to assimilate into the majority culture (except for the one Latino teacher).	the faculty and expressed that the school had a lack of outreach to connect to the home culture of their students. Survey results also suggested that white teachers contributed to this feeling of disenfranchisement through their expressed beliefs.	color in our nation's schools. In addition, teachers and leaders must examine their beliefs and trained on how to be culturally responsive. Color blindness and rejecting ones' home culture to assimilate into the new one alienates the very same students we are trying to engage.
Nelson, S.W., & Guerra, P.L. (2014)	Educator beliefs and cultural knowledge: Implications for school improvement efforts	To identify the beliefs that current teachers and leaders hold about culturally diverse	A qualitative study where participants were provided actual teacher scenarios that were centered on components	73 educational leaders and 38 teachers from 2 suburban school districts in Texas and Michigan. Both districts were	Five categories of cultural awareness emerged from the coding process ranging from "Culturally Unaware" to "Culturally	The majority of participants demonstrated a general awareness of culture, yet a majority of them hold deficit beliefs about diverse	In order to build cultural competence, preparation programs and staff development programs must

Author(s), Date	Title	Purpose	Method	Sample	Result(s)	Conclusion(s)	Implication(s)
		students and their families, to assess their cultural knowledge, and to examine how this is applied in practice.	such as curriculum, instruction and relationship building. Each scenario depicted some form of a culture clash and participants were asked 2 questions about each scenario. Interrater reliability was used to code the instruments to identify examples of educator beliefs, knowledge of culture and application.	experiencing demographic changes and were located directly outside urban areas.	Responsive." 14% of participants fell under culturally unaware, 39% had little awareness of culture, 44% demonstrated a general awareness of culture, 3% were culturally aware, and only one leader (>1%) was culturally responsive.	students and their families. Teachers appeared to have more cultural knowledge than leaders, but held more deficit beliefs than leaders. Due to this, educators attempt to close the achievement gap using pedagogy without considering the need to provide an equitable, culturally responsive learning environment	help teachers and leaders understand how cultural identity impacts all areas of schooling

Author(s), Date	Title	Purpose	Method	Sample	Result(s)	Conclusion(s)	Implication(s)
Park, S., & Holloway, S. D. (2013).	No parent left behind: Predicting parental involvement in adolescents' education within a sociodemo-graphically diverse population.	To identify the factors that promote parental involvement in their adolescent children's education across a variety of racial/ethnic and sociodemo-graphic groups within a nationally representative sample. The study tested the Hoover-Dempsey and Saddler (HDS) model of predicting parental involvement.	Parents answered questions using a Likert-type scale regarding concepts of parental motivational beliefs, parental involvement, and parent demographics.	3284 parents or guardians of high school students. Names were obtained from the Parent and Family Involvement and Education Survey from 2007 done through the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).	At the high school level, an additional indicator of parental involvement that arises is parents' college expectations and financial planning. Also, it was found that the more support given at home, the less likely it was for those parents to engage in college planning. Involvement at the school level based on racial/ethnic backgrounds was irrelevant when household income and mother's educational level was taken into account.	Overall, parents from higher SES backgrounds are more likely to be involved at school and in expectations and college planning than lower SES parents. Black parents and lower SES parents were more involved with homework than White parents and higher SES parents.	Future studies should include race/ethnicity, mother's education, and household income in parent involvement analysis due to their independent effects on different aspects of parental involvement.

Author(s), Date	Title	Purpose	Method	Sample	Result(s)	Conclusion(s)	Implication(s)
Whitaker, M., & Hoover-Dempsey, K. (2013).	School influences on parents' role beliefs.	To examine how parents' role beliefs about their children's education is connected to prior experiences with schools as well as their experiences with specific school practices of parent involvement invitations.	Anonymous parent survey packets were used to send home to the parents of all students. Incentives were given to students for returning completed packets. All scales in the survey questionnaire underwent face and content validity evaluations by a panel. Each scale included used a six point Likert-type response scale.	Middle School parents from 2 Title 1 schools in a large, metropolitan area of the Southeastern United States.	The findings noted that the school's climate, the parents' perceptions of school expectations of involvement, and student invitations to involvement predicted parental role beliefs.	The actions of schools to engage parents work to positively influence parental beliefs about their role in supporting their child's learning. Also, it was found that parents' current experiences with schools were more powerful than their prior school experiences in predicting their role beliefs.	Schools should focus on extending positive and specific invitations to involvement to all parents. Further research is needed in more Title I schools and urban schools with diverse demographics in order to better understand how contextual invitations to involvement across these groups shape role beliefs and behaviors that support student learning.

APPENDIX B

ACTION RESEARCH TEAM INVITATION LETTER

Action Research Team Invitation Letter

May 23, 2016

Dear ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ Elementary School Educators and Parents:

My name is Karen Casanova, and I am an EdD graduate student under the direction of Professor Dr. Sheneka Williams in the Department of Lifelong Education, Administration and Policy at The University of Georgia. I would like to invite you to participate in a research study titled "Involving Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Parents and Families through Action Research" that is being conducted as a partnership between Gwinnett County School System and the Department of Lifelong Education, Administration and Policy at The University of Georgia.

Problem:
Camp Creek Elementary School is a diverse community with a demographic composition that reflects a non-white majority. The school benefits from an extremely active Parent Teacher Association (PTA) which helps to coordinate programs, raise money for the school, and provide classroom support for teachers through volunteers. However, careful analysis of the PTA and parent survey data shows that our parent involvement does not reflect the diversity of our school's overall demographics.

Purpose:
The purpose of this study is to improve the current levels of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) parent involvement at Camp Creek ES by developing a framework to promote varying levels of involvement both at school and at home. The study's research questions are as follows:
1. In which ways do cultural and linguistic diversity affect how parents define parental involvement? How does that definition affect the way parents engage with the school?
2. How does, if at all, the action research process alleviate barriers to parent involvement as explained by Bourdieu's Theory of Cultural Capital and Moll's Funds of Knowledge Theory?

Goals of Action Research:
Your participation will involve being part of an Action Research Team that will meet at least twice a month for an hour. This team will examine the current problem at Camp Creek Elementary School, and help to answer the research questions stated above through the action research process.

I sincerely hope you will consider accepting this invitation to be a member of the action research team for this study. This research could not only potentially benefit our local school

community, but also help other schools to improve their levels of CLD parent involvement as well.

If you have any questions about this research project, or if you would like to accept this invitation and be a part of the action research team for this study, please call me at (404) 427-5402 or send an e-mail to karen.casanova25@uga.edu.

Thank you for your consideration!
Sincerely,
Karen Casanova

APPENDIX C

ACTION RESEARCH TEAM CONSENT FORM

Action Research Team
Consent Form

Researcher's Statement
I am asking you to be a member of an action research team helping to facilitate a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This form is designed to give you the information about the study so you can decide whether to be in the study or not. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." A copy of this form will be given to you.

Principal Investigator: Dr. Sheneka Williams, Associate Professor and Coordinator
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Co-Investigator: Karen Casanova, UGA Doctoral Student
                                Email: kec60226@uga.edu

Purpose of the Study:
The purpose of this study is to improve the current levels of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) parent involvement at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ Elementary School by developing a framework to promote varying levels of involvement both at school and at home. Research exists noting how culture, language, and socioeconomic status impact how people define and understand parent involvement. Therefore, there is a need to create a common understanding of what defines parental involvement and help mitigate some of the barriers CLD parents may face to being more involved in order to strengthen the existing relationship between ▮▮▮▮ and its diverse community. You are being asked to participate because you are a school community member and your feedback is being solicited.

The study's research questions are as follows:

1. In which ways do cultural and linguistic diversity affect how parents define parental involvement? How does that definition affect the way parents engage with the school?
2. How does, if at all, the action research process alleviate barriers to parent involvement as explained by Bourdieu's Theory of Cultural Capital and Moll's Funds of Knowledge Theory?

Study Procedures:
If you agree to participate, you will be asked to…
- Attend action research team meetings twice a month for an hour
  - Topics will be as follows
    - Review and analyze current data regarding CLD parents at ▮▮▮▮
    - Assist in developing and implementing an intervention plan
    - Evaluate and review the interventions

Risks and Discomforts:
There are no known risks of which we are aware associated with participating in this research. No more than minimal discomfort is expected. Being that you are school community members in the role of either teacher or current parent PTA member, and being that the researcher is an Assistant Principal at the school where they work, discomfort could come up when discussing cultural issues which may examine personal beliefs or biases. In the case that an action research team member feels discomfort, please let the researcher know at any time, and any data that you would not like to share will not be added to the research.

Benefits:
The participants of this project may see beneficial changes in the way the school interacts and/or provides opportunities for our culturally and linguistically diverse families. The findings from this project may provide information on how to better involve our school's culturally and linguistically diverse parents in order to strengthen the existing relationship with the school.

Incentives for Participation:
There are no specific incentives for participation in the study.

Audio/Video Recording:
Action research team meetings will be audio recorded using a smartphone recording app. All recorded data will be downloaded to a laptop that is password protected. Once downloaded, the recording on the smartphone will be deleted. Recordings will be archived upon transcription in a password protected file and deleted after five years.

Privacy/Confidentiality:
No individually-identifiable information about you or provided by you during the research will be shared with others without my written permission. The results of the research study may be published, but your name will not be used. In fact, the published results will be presented in summary form only. Your identity will not be associated with your responses in any published format.

Taking Part is Voluntary:

Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as yours will be destroyed and not used as part of this study. Your participation in the study will not affect your employment status with Gwinnett County Public Schools or your roll with the school's PTA.

If You Have Questions:
The main researcher conducting this study is Karen Casanova, a graduate student at the University of Georgia, under the guidance of Dr. Sheneka Williams. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Karen Casanova at kec60226@uga.edu or at 404-427-5402. If you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706-542-3199 or irb@uga.edu.

Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:
To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. Your signature below indicates that you have read or had read to you this entire consent form, and have had all of your questions answered. The decision about participation will not affect your employment or relationship with your school or district.

Karen E. Casanova_____   _____   _____
Name of Researcher   Signature   Date

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Signature   Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

APPENDIX D

PARENT CONSENT FORM

Parent Consent to Participate

July 6, 2016

Dear ████████ Families:

I am an EdD graduate student under the direction of Associate Professor and Coordinator Sheneka Williams, in the Department of Lifelong Education, Administration and Policy at The University of Georgia.   I invite you to participate in a research study entitled "Involving Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Parents and Families through Action Research" that is being conducted as a partnership between Gwinnett County School System and the Department of Lifelong Education, Administration and Policy at The University of Georgia. The purpose of this study is to improve the current levels of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) parent involvement at ████████ ES by developing a framework to promote varying levels of involvement both at school and at home.

You are being asked to participate because you are a parent or guardian of a student currently enrolled at the school and your feedback is being solicited. Participants in this study should be 18 years of age or older.

Study Procedures:
If you agree to participate, you will be asked to…
- Complete an anonymous survey about your experience as a ████████ parent, which will take 10-15 minutes to complete.
- Decide if you would also like to participate in an audio-recorded focus group interview for 30-45 minutes
    - o Topics of the focus group will be as follows:
        - ▪ Your perceptions of the role the school should play in your child's education
        - ▪ Your perceptions of the role you play in your child's education
        - ▪ Ideas on how the school can help involve more of our culturally and linguistically diverse parents and families
    - **In order to participate in the focus group, you must contact me, Karen Casanova, using the contact information found at the bottom of this form.**

Audio/Video Recording:
Focus group interviews will be audio recorded using a smartphone recording app. All recorded data will be downloaded to a laptop that is password protected. Once downloaded, the recording on the smartphone will be deleted. Recordings will be archived upon transcription in a password protected file and deleted after five years.

Privacy/Confidentiality:
The survey data will be collected anonymously and stored in a locked filing cabinet. The focus group interviews will be coded to identify trends that relate to the research questions. While the researchers will discourage anyone from sharing this information outside the focus group, they cannot guarantee that confidentiality will be maintained by other group members. The researchers, however, will keep your personally identifiable information confidential by providing pseudonyms for all participants and the school to protect their identities. Data will be published in summary form. Identifiable data will be stored in a password protected file. All identifiable data will be deleted after five years. Researchers will not release identifiable results of the study to anyone other than individuals working on the project without your written consent unless required by law.

Taking Part is Voluntary:
Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to stop or withdraw from the study, the information/data collected from or about you up to the point of your withdrawal will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed.

Benefits and Risks/Discomfort:
The participants of this project may see beneficial changes in the way the school interacts and/or provides opportunities for our culturally and linguistically diverse families. The findings from this project may provide information on how to better involve our school's culturally and linguistically diverse parents in order to strengthen the existing relationship with the school. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

Incentives for Participation:
There are no specific incentives for participation in the study.

Questions:
If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call me, Karen Casanova, at 404-427-5402 or send an e-mail to kec60226@uga.edu.   Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to The Chairperson, University of Georgia Institutional Review Board; telephone (706) 542-3199; email address irb@uga.edu.

Consent:
By completing and returning this survey, either electronically or in the envelope provided, you are agreeing to participate in the above described research project.

Thank you for your consideration! Please keep this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

Karen Casanova

APPENDIX E

PARENT SURVEY

Parent Survey

Involving Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Parents and Families through Action Research

Please select your race/ethnicity.	White Native ☐	Black ☐	Asian/Pacific Islander ☐	Multiracial ☐	American Indian/Alaskan ☐
Are you Hispanic or Latino?		Yes ☐		No ☐	
Is English the primary language spoken in your home?		Yes ☐		No ☐	
Please indicate any languages other than English spoken in your home.	Languages:_____				

Question					
1. How often do you communicate with teachers at your child's school whether in person, by telephone, by email, or in some other way?	**Almost Never** ☐	**Once or twice a Year** ☐	**Every Few Months** ☐	**Monthly** ☐	**Weekly or More** ☐
2. Describe your level of involvement with parent groups at your child's school?	**Not Involved at All** ☐	**A Little Involved** ☐	**Somewhat Involved** ☐	**Quite Involved** ☐	**Extremely Involved** ☐
3. In the past year, how often have you visited your child's school?	**Almost Never** ☐	**Once or twice a Year** ☐	**Every Few Months** ☐	**Monthly** ☐	**Weekly or More** ☐
4. In the past year, how often have you helped out at your child's school?	**Almost Never** ☐	**Once or twice a Year** ☐	**Every Few Months** ☐	**Monthly** ☐	**Weekly or More** ☐

5. How involved have you been in fundraising efforts at your child's school?	**Not Involved at All** □	**A Little Involved** □	**Somewhat Involved** □	**Quite Involved** □	**Extremely Involved** □
6. In the past year, how often have you discussed your child's school with other parents from the school?	**Almost Never** □	**Once or twice a Year** □	**Every Few Months** □	**Monthly** □	**Weekly or More** □
7. How often are you invited to your child's school for a program, performance or other event?	**Almost Never** □	**Once or twice a Year** □	**Every Few Months** □	**Monthly** □	**Weekly or More** □
8. How often do you go to meetings at your child's school?	**Almost Never** □	**Once or twice a Year** □	**Every Few Months** □	**Monthly** □	**Weekly or More** □
9. How often do you receive information about what your child is studying in school?	**Almost Never** □	**Once or twice a Year** □	**Every Few Months** □	**Monthly** □	**Weekly or More** □
10. In the past year, how involved have you been in providing input about school decisions to the school leaders?	**Not Involved at All** □	**A Little Involved** □	**Somewhat Involved** □	**Quite Involved** □	**Extremely Involved** □

Please answer by marking one of the following: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, or

Don't Know

11. Communication from teachers and the school arrive in a language that I understand.

Strongly Agree Disagree Strongly
Don't
Agree   Disagree

12. I understand the school rules.

Strongly Agree Disagree Strongly
Don't
Agree   Disagree

13. I feel welcome and respected in my child's school.

Strongly Agree Disagree Strongly
Don't
Agree   Disagree

14. I have opportunities for involvement at my child's school.

Strongly Agree Disagree Strongly
Don't
Agree   Disagree

15. I feel comfortable asking questions to people at the school.

Strongly Agree Disagree Strongly
Don't
Agree   Disagree

16. If I have questions or concerns, I know who to contact.

Strongly Don't Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

17. I talk with my child's teacher about what I can do to help my child learn.

Strongly Don't Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

18. I am able to read and understand all parts of my child's report card.

Strongly Don't Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

19. I am satisfied with the way the school responds to me when I have a concern.

Strongly Don't Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

20. I feel that the school could make changes that would allow me to participate more in my child's education.

Strongly Don't Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Many times parents face a variety of challenges that impede them from more active involvement in the school (child care, transportation, language concerns, work schedules, etc.). Please make any suggestions in the space below on possible services or opportunities that the school could assist with in order to help alleviate some of those challenges.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Questions for this survey were taken and adapted from:
Connecticut's System for Educator Evaluation and Development http://www.connecticutseed.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Parent_Survey_Question_Bank.pdf
Harvard Graduate School of Education Parent Survey https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/parent-engagement-survey-template/

APPENDIX F

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE

Focus Group Interview Guide

Involving Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Parents and Families
Through Action Research

Hello, everyone. As you know, I am a doctoral student at the University of Georgia. I am currently working on gaining a deeper understanding of the levels of parent involvement here at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮. I am specifically focusing on the relationship between the parents and families of our culturally diverse students and our school. I am focusing on this population because our PTA membership list does not demographically reflect our overall student population.   In addition, data from our district's annual parent perception survey noted that some areas where parents thought our school could improve correlated to issues of communication and responsiveness relating to diversity.   I would like to thank you all for spending your time with me today. Please know that I greatly value the role each of you play as parents here at our school and thank you for everything you do to help our students be successful.

Before we begin the focus group interview, I would like to remind you that I am recording the interview and the information you share during the focus group will be kept confidential, as explained in the consent form. I will not use your name or any other identifying information about you or our school; pseudonyms will be provided. At any point in the focus group if you would like to clarify a statement please let me know. At the end of the focus group I will ask you if there is any additional information you would like to add. Do you have any questions before we begin the focus group interview?

1. To start, let's go around and introduce ourselves to each other by saying your name, the grade of you student or students, your cultural background, and any other languages you may speak. Also, please let us know how long you have been a part of this school community.

2. I'd like for you to list the following three objectives relating to the role of the school in order of importance.   Please explain your rationale.

    a. teach students content and curriculum
    b. teach students life skills such as collaboration and respect for others
    c. support and promote students' emotional and physical growth

3. Are you in agreement that schools should do all of the above? If not, please explain your thoughts.

4. Are you a member of the PTA? If not, is there a reason other than the cost that has kept you from becoming a member?

5. What is your opinion of your role as a parent in the school?

6. How do you feel you support your student in their education?

7. Do you feel as though your opinion and your participation are welcomed here at the school? If not, could you please explain why you feel this way?

8. What can the school do to help make you (our culturally and linguistically diverse parents) feel more connected within the school?

Clarification questions and transition statements I will employ could include:
- You mentioned _____. Tell me a bit more about what you mean by that.
- You talked about _____. Does anyone have an example of that?
- Does anyone have any other stories about _____ that you would like to share?
- We've heard _____, what are other views about that?
- Before we move on, would anyone else like to add to what has been said about _____?

To close, I would like to thank you for your time and providing valuable knowledge, information, and insights into helping us strengthen our relationship with our culturally diverse families. I appreciated your honesty, and I enjoyed listening and learning from you.

APPENDIX G

PARENT MEETING FEEDBACK FORM

Parent Meeting Feedback Sheet

How did you hear about this meeting?

_____Weekly Paws

_____English flyer in my child's Friday Folder

_____Flyer in my language in my child's Friday Folder

_____ From another parent

Was there anything additional being offered this evening that helped make it easier for you to attend?

_____Child care

_____Interpreters

Were the topics covered at this meeting helpful to increase your awareness and understanding?

_____ YES   _____NO

Will the information provided in this session help you to become more involved at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ Elementary School?

_____YES   _____NO   _____NOT SURE YET

In order to help the school better serve you, which topics would you like more information about?

_____