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PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT AND EQUITABLE FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS:
PERSPECTIVES FROM INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

By
Alexine Thomas-Brown

A Dissertation Submitted to the
Gardner-Webb University College of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Gardner-Webb University
2023

Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Alexine Thomas-Brown under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University College of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

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Without the unwavering support of my parents, Herbert and Gloria Thomas, I would not have been here today. Thank you for your endless love and push for tenacity; it has given me the drive to dream big, set goals, and shoot for the stars. I love you both with my entire being. This doctorate is for you. A very special thank you to my husband Robert, whose patience and constant motivation have kept me going through this process. To my brother Alex Thomas and friends Melisa and Sasha, thank you for staying up with me to help me throughout this process to see this dream come to fruition. Special thanks to my cohort and support system; I am eternally grateful.

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Abstract

PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT AND EQUITABLE FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS: PERSPECTIVES FROM INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS. Thomas-Brown, Alexine, 2023: Dissertation, Gardner-Webb University.

This research study explored the critical topic of parental engagement and equitable family partnerships. The study aimed to provide holistic insight by uncovering internal and external stakeholders' combined perceptions regarding equitable parental engagement to establish a protocol for individualized support. Purposeful sampling was used to select the study's participants. Participants were categorized into two groups: internal stakeholders, who included teachers, social workers, and administrators; and external stakeholders, who included parents and guardians. Open-ended surveys and interviews were used to collect insight from internal and external stakeholders. The data were analyzed thematically and interpreted against Epstein et al.'s (2019) and Darling-Hammond's (2010) theories. This research has important practical implications for promoting equitable family engagement, such as actively implementing outreach programs to engage families; providing parent education and support in the form of workshops, training, and resources; and leveraging technology for improved communication.

Keywords: family engagement, partnership, barriers to family engagement, equitable family engagement

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

All plants need sunlight and water to grow. A cactus needs a lot of sun and little water; tulips require a moderate amount of both to produce a healthy bloom, while a fern needs a lot of water but little sun to grow healthy. A gardener would not plant all three together and expect all to thrive; however, we fill our classrooms with students with varying needs without individualized family support. Schools must devise ways to identify the individualized needs of students and their families to provide individualized support through equitable partnership efforts. There is a demand to strengthen and improve equitable partnerships. As I performed my preliminary research regarding partnerships when I completed a Family and Community Equity Plan and Comprehensive Organizational and Needs Assessment at the site, I noticed a gap concerning equity. I asked myself, “Do all families receive a generalized attempt at family engagement? Or do schools and districts pay close attention to the student population's diversity and provide differentiated engagement strategies to promote equity?” Schools must devise ways to identify the individualized needs of students and their families to provide individualized support through equitable partnership efforts.

Family engagement creates connections and bridges the gap between families and schools, but what does it look like for a student from a volatile community? What does it look like for a new immigrant family? What does it look like for the families of passing versus failing students? What does it look like for a family without access to technology? What does it look like for temporary guardians? To effectively bridge the gap between families and schools, partnership and engagement efforts must be equitable (Jacques &

Villegas, 2018). Each child comes to us from varying cultural backgrounds, life experiences, family structures, and access to economic resources; therefore, thinking each child/family needs the same family engagement approach is irresponsible.

By focusing on equitable treatment and support with an individualized approach, we can consider the individual needs of families and provide resources and support to meet those needs so all students can thrive in school and life. As we engage families and cater to their unique needs, we can provide individualized student support critical to attacking the equity gap. We must include parents in decision-making so they can share their concerns and identify when we are not meeting their needs. By doing this, we show them they are valued and reinforce the belief that everyone can support student success. Ultimately, elevating equitable partnerships alongside teaching and learning improves student achievement (Davies, 2000). Building and maintaining those relationships can harness the benefits of equitable partnerships.

Problem Statement

Among the challenges that school districts face in strengthening family and community engagement is the incorporation of equity and diversity initiatives to meet the needs of the diverse school population (Catsambis, 2001; Cramer et al., 2018; Davies, 2000; Epstein, 2011). Decades of extensive research show the unlimited benefits of parental engagement, such as improved student attendance, higher achievement levels, improved behavior, and increased graduation rate (Catsambis, 2001; Cripps & Zyromski, 2015; Epstein, 2011; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Wheeler, 2019). Despite efforts in equity initiatives over the last decade, disparities and lack of equity within the education system still plague us today. Parent engagement and equitable partnerships in education benefit

the whole child by increasing academic skills, dispositions, frames of mind, conscientiousness, and diligence (Cramer et al., 2018; Epstein et al., 2019; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Successful partnerships require effective collaboration that meets the needs of all families to enhance school and family relationships that will ultimately create an optimal learning environment.

There has been an increased effort to strengthen the school-family engagement infrastructure at the site, such as an active student support team of teachers, social workers, counselors, mental health advocates, and attendance liaisons dedicated to engaging families. Also, family engagement programs and practices currently being utilized at the site include home visits for frequently absent students, parenting classes, parent night, weekly ConnectEd phone calls to parents, school highlights posted in the weekly paper, teacher-parent phone calls, and parent volunteers. Nevertheless, there is always room for improvement, especially since many of these efforts were often generalized and not individualized. As I completed coursework over the last 2 years, I thoroughly analyzed the teacher working condition surveys for the school; school improvement plans; and a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis for the site. Data from these analyses showed a need to study this topic more in-depth. Figure 1 shows a screenshot of a prioritized SWOT analysis section from a comprehensive needs assessment focusing on family and community involvement.

Figure 1*SWOT Analysis for Family and Community Engagement*

Strength	Weakness
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teachers and administrators have an open-door policy to promote communication between parents and staff. 2. The school uses various platforms to communicate with internal and external stakeholders, such as email, Facebook, school website, Twitter, county newspaper, connect ED phone calls weekly, and newsletters. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Only 39% of teachers believe that parents/guardians support teachers, contributing to their success with students. 2. Parents do not usually follow up on their child's academics and behavior.
Opportunity	Threat
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improved communication between parents and teacher 2. External stakeholders are very active in the institution providing additional resources and using motivational strategies to help improve students' performance. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A lack of community engagement toward academics.

Note: Data obtained from COANA

As shown in Figure 1, data analysis from the comprehensive needs assessment revealed various weaknesses and threats regarding family engagement. Two points to note were that only 39% of teachers believed parents supported teachers and did not usually follow up on their child's academic and behavioral issues. These concerns can be addressed through effective and equitable partnerships.

The data further solidified the need to improve family engagement as I analyzed the site's 2022 Teacher Working Condition Survey. Figure 2 shows a screenshot of areas of concern.

Figure 2

Screenshot of 2022 Teacher Working Condition Survey Section on Involvement

A Parents/guardians are influential decision makers in this school.

	State	District	School
Strongly disagree	4.95%	8.67%	7.92%
Disagree	21.29%	26.89%	33.66%
Agree	50.59%	44.89%	35.64%
Strongly agree	15.07%	11.33%	15.84%
Don't know	8.09%	8.22%	6.93%
Counts	107,387	450	101

C This school does a good job of encouraging parent/guardian involvement.

	State	District	School
Strongly disagree	1.95%	2.67%	2.97%
Disagree	10.04%	10.00%	15.84%
Agree	55.56%	59.78%	60.40%
Strongly agree	29.68%	24.89%	14.85%
Don't know	2.77%	2.67%	5.94%
Counts	107,387	450	101

F Parents/guardians support teachers, contributing to their success with students.

	State	District	School
Strongly disagree	5.47%	11.56%	15.84%
Disagree	21.41%	30.00%	38.61%
Agree	55.82%	48.89%	38.61%
Strongly agree	13.98%	7.33%	1.98%
Don't know	3.31%	2.22%	4.95%
Counts	107,387	450	101

As shown in Figure 2, the Teacher Working Condition Survey revealed that 41.58% of teachers disagreed that parents were influential decision-makers, and 54.45% disagreed that parents supported teachers, even though 75.25% of teachers thought the school did an excellent job of encouraging involvement. There was a disconnect between these data points, and leaders must address these challenges with an appropriate plan.

Background of Study

For years, the idea of improving partnerships between the school and family has

been a focus of many schools and districts (Epstein et al., 2019). Through the practice of partnership, schools can support the general needs of students. When we introduce the concept of equity, we can cater to each student's individual and unique needs (Latta, 2019). Extensive research supports the need for parental engagement and its link to improved school academic achievement (Davies, 2000; Epstein & Salinas, 2004; Epstein et al., 2019; Goodall & Montgomery, 2014; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Wheeler, 2019). Still, there is a gap in research as it relates to equity and equitable family partnerships, particularly one that caters to the individualized needs of families.

Epstein et al. (2019) supported the many benefits of school-family partnerships. Her publications on school, family, and community partnerships provided insights into improving student success and achievement through effective and equitable partnership programs. Epstein et al. identified the six spheres of influence related to school, family, and community partnerships as the types of involvement: (a) parenting, (b) communicating, (c) volunteering, (d) learning at home, (e) decision-making, and (f) collaborating. The six spheres of influence framework supports developing more comprehensive programs that increase partnerships. Another notable researcher in equity research is Darling-Hammond (2010), who has been a driving force in educational equity for decades (DePaul, 2021).

Researchers widely characterize parental engagement as the actions, attitudes, beliefs, and activities between a parent and school that promote their children's academic growth, learning capacity, and educational results (Wheeler, 2019). On the other hand, equitable family engagement prioritizes meaningful and realistic engagement initiatives between schools and families that cater to the needs of families and do not stigmatize or

label particular parent groups as lacking in parental involvement (Day, 2013). Schools and districts must apply evidence-based strategies to their partnership efforts as they strive to shift from parent engagement to equitable family partnerships. First, schools must initiate a culture shift and commit to equitable partnerships and shared responsibility between schools and families (Jacques & Villegas, 2018). Schools and districts can support a culture of equitable family engagement by strategically planning and offering professional learning on culturally responsive teaching. Second, equitable family engagement should be the norm (Jacques & Villegas, 2018). The diversity among school and district personnel should reflect the diversity of the school population. Having a diverse school staff that reflects the background or culture of the larger school community may enhance communication, relationships, and interactions with families (Davies, 2000). Not only should schools hire diverse staff, but schools should also hire staff responsible for managing engagement efforts. Schools and districts can also ensure that communication is accessible to all families by creating tools to bridge the language barriers and communication gaps. Next, schools and districts must strive to be welcoming to all families (Jacques & Villegas, 2018). Families and schools can establish trust and minimize the barriers to parent participation by being more welcoming. These relationships are created by introducing research-based strategies to enhance partnerships that encourage the holistic development and learning of students (Epstein & Salinas, 2004). Educators feel better equipped to carry out their duties effectively when they believe they have the support of the school and families (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Gabriel, 2017).

Implementing these research-based initiatives that reflect the needs and beliefs of

the community, schools, and districts may make family engagement more equitable and effective (Cramer et al., 2018). As the community's demands vary over time, it may be necessary to modify these strategies, especially considering how fast community demographics and culture may shift (Bazron et al., 2005). Engaging in periodic needs assessment or reflection activities and exchanging best practices by collaborating with other districts with similar diversity ratios can guarantee that family participation is equitable and beneficial for all families (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Epstein et al., 2019; Rabinowitz et al., 2019).

Purpose of the Study

This research sought to provide holistic insight by uncovering the combined perceptions of internal and external stakeholders regarding equitable parental engagement to establish a protocol for individualized support. After all, perception drives practice (Bandura, 1977). When engaging in equity work, in wanting to support students and families, we try to find an immediate solution, but frequently, the solution is underlying and not visible. Through an explanatory sequential mixed method design with a phenomenological approach, this research aimed to understand and explain the effects of family engagement and equitable partnership as perceived by internal and external stakeholders. Internal and external stakeholders must play their part in improving educational processes, particularly in building and sustaining equitable partnerships. I investigated the combined perceptions of internal and external stakeholders and uncovered systematic barriers and inequalities that marginalized students and their families face. It was essential to identify the gaps perpetuated by the education system and make a plan to create a more deliberate solution. We must identify areas for

improvement within our school to bridge those gaps and dismantle the inequities in our classrooms and the school system. This research asked the right questions to connect to the issue I wanted to solve. We can use this research to create initiatives to support the unique needs of students and their families and explore actions necessary to increase parent engagement within the school and district.

Research Questions

Effective partnerships between families and schools should be equitable and centered around the individualized needs of the students and their families to provide the necessary support. This research sought to provide holistic insight by uncovering the combined perceptions of internal and external stakeholders regarding equitable parental engagement to establish a protocol for individualized support. The following questions guided this research.

1. How do the perceptions of internal and external stakeholders' experiences of equitable family engagement in this school differ?
2. What barriers do stakeholders believe are most problematic in building and sustaining equitable family partnerships?
 - a. Internal Stakeholders
 - b. External Stakeholders
3. What solutions do stakeholders see as ways to individualize family engagement?
 - a. Internal Stakeholders
 - b. External Stakeholders

Significance of Study

In an era of increased accountability, examining stakeholder perspectives was necessary to ensure I capitalized on fair and equitable partnerships, especially with ethnically and racially diverse population growth. Investigating stakeholder perceptions provides a first-hand look into the realities within the institution, uncovers gaps, and uncovers any concerns relating to equity (Sivrais, 2018). This phenomenological study analyzed perceptions through interviews and surveys, leading to actionable recommendations and considerations. Internal and external stakeholders must acknowledge that their objective is to work together for the children's sake, as we cannot overemphasize the importance of involving parents in their children's education. An equitable partnership is fundamental and should be core to the mission of public education. These partnerships build cultural proficiencies around the cultures and traditions of families (Davies, 2000). When we uncover the underlying barriers to equitable family engagement, we can address those issues by designing a deliberate solution using research-based strategies.

There are a lot of beneficial outcomes that can arise from implementing an effective partnership through an equity lens. Benefits can include improved student engagement, improved social and emotional learning, increased self-awareness, and engendering trust between students and their teachers (Dodd, 2017). Growing evidence supports the shift from parent engagement to equitable family partnerships (Cramer et al., 2018; Day, 2013). Ferlazzo (2011) noted that parental engagement involves parent participation in school activities and meetings, while Day (2013) supported the notion that equitable family engagement provides individualized support for families. We can

reap the many benefits when we fully understand the deeper meaning of equitable family partnerships. An accurate evaluation of the perspectives of internal and external stakeholders is required before leaders can form plans to provide equitable family engagement with an individualized approach. This study compared the perspectives on equity to determine trends and disparities between the viewpoints. Although studies have revealed the various views of parents and teachers regarding parent engagement (Houtenville & Smith, 2008), a need to examine perceptions of equity more thoroughly was necessary.

Many schools and districts have a family engagement plan; however, many plans are generalized. With this study, I gathered and analyzed perspectives from internal and external stakeholders to establish a protocol for creating a plan that supports equitable partnership with an individualized approach. Day (2013) noted that equitable family partnerships should include specific practices and approaches tailored to the needs of families as opposed to treating parents as a group.

As with every plan and idea, barriers exist regarding equitable family partnerships. Some challenges include family education level, time constraints to attend meetings and events, stress regarding cultural dissonance, cultural and communication barriers, unrealistic expectations of families, and lack of preparation to engage diverse families (Bazron et al., 2005; Catsambis, 2001; Cripps & Zyromski, 2015; Davies, 2000; Epstein & Salinas, 2004). As we implement strategies to engage all families effectively, we must first devise ways to identify and overcome those barriers. Although a large volume of research exists on generalized family involvement practices, many schools and districts remain unsure of how to engage all families equitably.

This phenomenological approach was a significant initiative in assisting stakeholders in gaining a more in-depth knowledge of the motivating causes driving family engagement in the education process and the disparities experienced in equity. As I uncover and analyze the perceptions that contribute to or impede equitable home support and engagement in the school environment, I can assist in implementing remedial measures at both the school and district levels. This information can help educators better quantify and qualify the design of equitable home support programs. They may also utilize this information to attain and quantify equity to improve the quality of education and accountability.

Definition of Terms

The following are terms used within the study.

Culturally Responsive

Being culturally responsive is acknowledging one's culture and values while respecting and learning from other cultural traditions and heritage (Vanderbilt University, n.d.).

Equity

The provision of individualized support is needed to reach a common goal (Cramer et al., 2018). Schools prioritizing equity versus equality are more in tune with the needs of their students and provide resources to overcome their specific challenges (Waterford, 2020).

External Stakeholders

External stakeholders are not directly involved in the daily work of the schools but have a strong interest in school outcomes. They do not directly determine what

produces those outcomes; they include parents, community members, and business partners (Engaging Stakeholders, 2006).

Holistic Development

Holistic development emphasizes the engagement and growth of the whole child; physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally (American University, 2020).

Internal Stakeholders

Internal stakeholders work within the school system daily and are essentially in control of what goes on there; they include school staff; district staff; and to some extent, school boards (Engaging Stakeholders, 2006).

Parental/Family Engagement

Parental engagement refers to parent(s) and staff working together to support and improve the learning, development, and health of adolescents (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018).

Parental/Family Involvement

Parental involvement is the meaningful participation of parents in their child's education and development (National Improvement Hub, 2021). Parental involvement includes two-way communication between parents and school.

Partnership

A collaborative process where stakeholders work together to achieve a common goal (Sage Publications, n.d.).

School Culture

The core beliefs and behaviors are evident in how the institution operates (Garrick, 2018).

Theoretical Framework

Educational equity and parental support maximize student success (Sanders, 2015). It is essential to recognize that many theories exist to support this claim. The theories that were the foundation of this research include the theory of overlapping spheres (Epstein et al., 2019) and the theory of educational equity (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

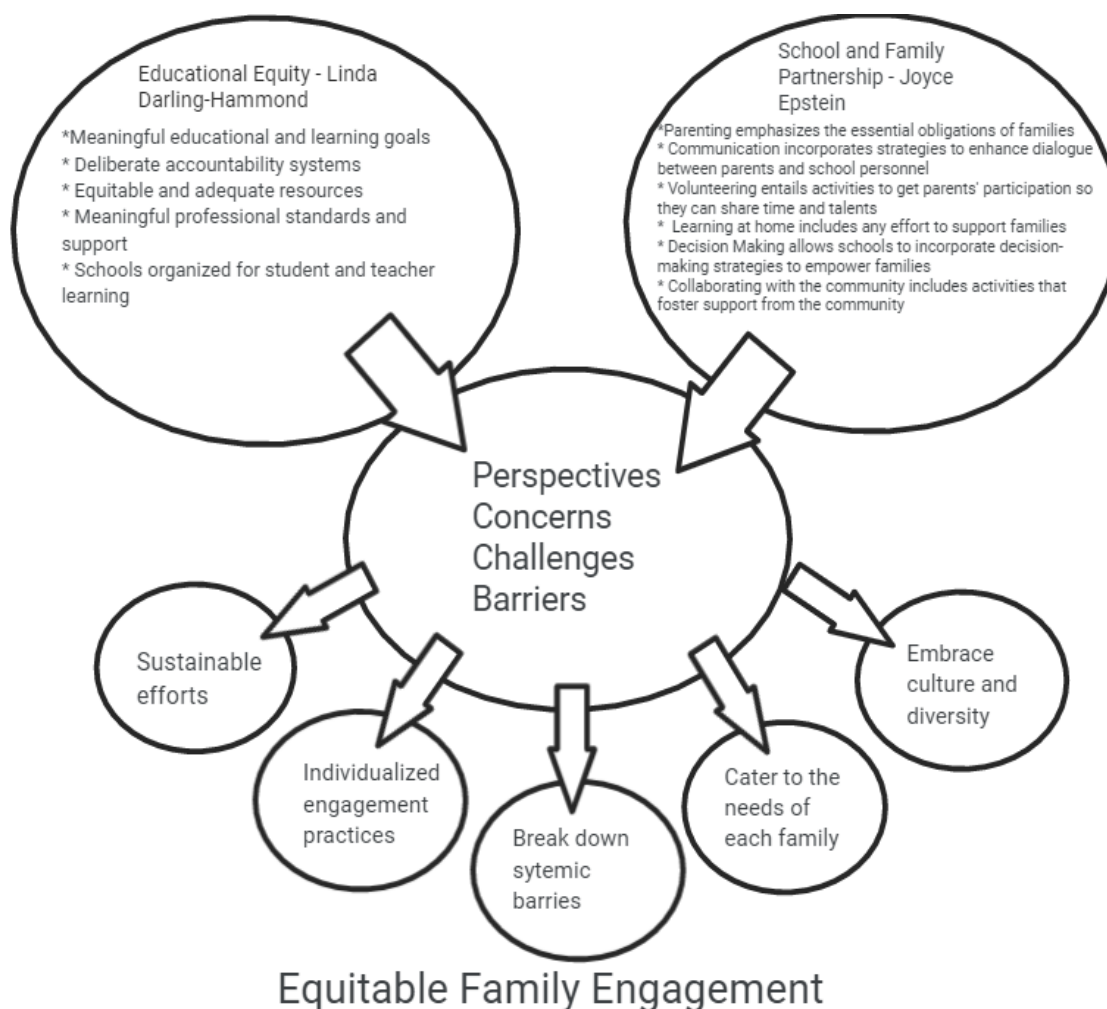
Epstein et al.'s (2019) multidimensional approach demonstrated the importance of a relationship between family, school, and community in a child's growth and education. According to Epstein et al., while collaboration across all three domains does not always and inevitably lead to success, the multidimensional approach should be the driving force to spark an intrinsic drive in children to achieve success. According to Darling-Hammond (2010), the American educational system has a "history of inequality" (p. 3). Too many of our students struggle because of poverty and segregation, unequal access to resources for schools, unbalanced distribution of highly skilled teachers, and a lack of a challenging curriculum. Merging these theories is a starting point.

The overlapping spheres of influence posited that collective school, home, and community efforts positively influence student learning (Epstein et al., 2019). Darling-Hammond (2010) believed that by revamping our educational system based on knowledge of learning and partnerships while emphasizing equity, we could "restart" (p. 45) it. These theoretical frameworks supported this dissertation since effective and equitable parental engagement should include the six types of involvement. This research methodology drew from the principles and concepts presented by Epstein et al. (2019) and Darling-Hammond to provide a deep and nuanced knowledge of home-school

engagement efforts within a context of equity. Figure 3 shows how this research utilized both frameworks.

Figure 3

Equitable Family Engagement Framework



Both frameworks complemented each other to develop the framework for this research to produce many additional benefits, as listed in Figure 3. Darling-Hammond (2010) and Epstein et al. (2019) envisioned a system that prepares young people for success in an information-based global society. By analyzing perspectives, I uncovered challenges, concerns, and barriers to creating an equitable and supportive environment

that provides and sustains high-quality educational opportunities for all.

Overview of Methodology

This research utilized an explanatory sequential mixed method design with a phenomenological approach to examine the perceptions of stakeholders of family engagement and equitable family partnerships. The phenomenological approach sought to investigate the experiences of research participants while erasing any of my preconceived ideas (Giorgi, 1995). The design allowed me to make meaning of the experiences of stakeholders to devise protocols to develop an individualized approach to equitable family engagement. This study was descriptive, with a cross-sectional method of data collection using an open-ended survey and interview. I used purposeful sampling to select participants based on specific inclusion criteria. The research group of internal stakeholders included subject teachers, counselors, school social workers, administrators, and district staff who interact directly with children and families. It was reasonable to presume that these stakeholders would be information-rich and well-equipped to share their experiences. This demographic excluded teaching assistants, substitute teachers, and other positions without direct family contact. I included parents and guardians in the research population of external stakeholders since community groups play only a supporting role and have no direct control over school operations.

I collected data in two phases. Data were collected using an open-ended survey in the first phase and interviews during the second phase. A copy of the survey items is in Appendix A, and a copy of the interview protocol is in Appendix B. Based on the inclusion criteria, I sent the open-ended survey to internal and external stakeholders. I interviewed five internal and five external stakeholders based on the concept of

saturation. Researchers agree that the number of participants in a survey should be at least 20, and in an interview, there should be five to 10 participants to reach saturation; that is the criterion for discontinuing data collection/analysis (Saunders et al., 2017).

I used the data collected from the survey to answer Research Question 1, and the interview to answer Research Questions 2 and 3. The data collected from both were then analyzed using thematic coding. I used the information gathered from this analysis to uncover the perceptions of stakeholders on the characteristics of equitable family and school partnerships, their roles in developing a protocol for building and sustaining individualized family engagement practices, and their perceptions of each other's roles in developing reliable and equitable family engagement. Chapter 3 has details of the methodology.

Summary

This paper has five chapters. The first chapter included an overview of the topic and background information on research and programs that have emphasized clear, consistent, and persuasive evidence on the advantages of family and community engagement in schools. The chapter specified limitations that may have led to the inability of many schools to establish and administer high-quality home-school engagement programs. The chapter promoted an assessment of the diverse opinions of stakeholders of family and community involvement to build and execute stronger family and community engagement programs in schools. The chapter explored the research questions to investigate the opinions of administrators, teachers, and students' families regarding the presence of family and community participation in the school in one high school. In addition to defining several key terms, the chapter discussed the study's

relevance, limitations, and delimitations.

Chapter 2 explores the related literature on the benefits of parental engagement partnerships to promote increased student achievement. In this chapter, I delve deep into the importance of school and family partnerships, equity efforts in partnership, and the theoretical framework that drives this research. Epstein et al.'s (2019) school and family partnership model, in tandem with Darling-Hammond's (2010) educational equity, forms the theoretical framework that supports this research. Epstein et al. explained the importance of six tangible steps that enhance parenthood and, as a result, increase student achievement. While completing this literature review, I also uncovered notable gaps in the literature as it related to equity and used these gaps as a justification for this research.

I thoroughly outline the methodology used to guide this research in Chapter 3. The chapter explains the rationale for an explanatory sequential mixed method design with a phenomenological approach and highlights the research questions, participants, instruments, data collection, and analysis process. In Chapter 3, I also note all ethical, reliability, and validity considerations and outline the possible limitations and delimitations that might have affected the validity of the research data.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of this research. I collected and thoroughly analyzed the data to identify trends, interpretations, commonalities, and discrepancies. I used specific questions on the survey and in the interview to answer each research question. In Chapter 5, I discuss the data by outlining the implications of the findings and connecting them to the theoretical framework. I also discuss recommendations for actions and future studies.

Last, Chapter 5 presents the interpretation of the findings and the implications of

the results and recommendations. Here, I carefully discuss the deeper understanding and relevance of the findings in the context of the research objectives. I examine patterns and trends within the data while exploring the practical and theoretical implications and making recommendations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Restatement of Problem

This research sought to provide holistic insight by uncovering the combined perceptions of internal and external stakeholders regarding equitable parental engagement to establish a protocol for individualized support through a comparative phenomenological analysis. There is a demand to strengthen partnership efforts, so exploring equitable partnerships to differentiate engagement efforts is essential. An equitable family partnership is a differentiated plan to engage families, educators, and community partners in the learning process to promote the learning of children from early childhood education through college and career (Pena-Shaff et al., 2019). Equitable family engagement acknowledges the need to include families in their children's learning process. It promotes the identification of strategies that can lead to meeting the additional needs of each family; thus, we can empower families to collaborate with educators and community partners to remove structural, systemic, and organizational barriers that hinder equity. Parents are directly involved with the school and teachers in the education process to fulfill their roles as support systems for the children's education and achievement of their career goals. I reviewed and analyzed several peer-reviewed articles, books, and related dissertations to gather legitimate data to help understand the topic. The topics of interest include but are not limited to equity, educational equity, parent engagement, and family engagement.

Educational Equity Versus Equality

Even though we can use the terms equity and equality interchangeably, they have some significant distinctions. While equality emphasizes giving all students the same

educational opportunities throughout their academic careers, this definition ignores that despite having the same opportunities, different students will require different supports to achieve success (Waterford, 2020). Equity focuses on utilizing the chances given to pupils and providing them with resources and support (Cramer et al., 2018). Equity implies that underprivileged pupils will receive assistance to catch up to others (Latta, 2019).

History of Educational Equity and Equality

As early as the 18th century, equality was used by countries worldwide as a basis for educational philosophy (Marschall & Shah, 2020). The concept of equality in education can be traced back to 1776 when Thomas Paine published "Agrarian Justice," which advocated for public school ("Paine, Thomas, 1737-1809," 1998). Paine proposed that education should be universal and free—a concept aligned with achieving educational equality. One of Paine's major advocacies was education because he believed it was fundamental to liberty and justice (Marschall & Shah, 2020). To achieve this theory of justice, Paine argued that in every township, leaders should build schools so all children could attend them regardless of their social class or race. Today, there is a greater need for these concepts to be addressed as many institutions have implemented policies and procedures based on inequity practices from the past (Muller, 2018).

Educational equity has been present on the political scene, with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Public Assistance Act of 1935 targeting at-risk students. In 1954, *Brown v. The Board of Education* ruled that segregation in schools was unconstitutional—a landmark moment that marked an actual turning point for equality and equity in education (Muller, 2018). Race and gender are the primary areas from

which the issues of educational equity and equality evolved (Muller, 2018). Differences in race and gender influence inequity and inequality in the education system. There must be equity for students to achieve successful educational outcomes (Waterford, 2020). Equity involves providing each student with specialized support considering potential obstacles and barriers (Latta, 2019). Although equality is good, it sometimes does not consider specific circumstances. For instance, giving every student a laptop to take home would not help pupils whose homes do not have internet access. Contrarily, equity offers people access to resources that are appropriate for their needs, including access to a hot spot for those without internet access (Waterford, 2020).

History of Equitable Family Partnership

For many years, most schools were traditional institutions where parents could not interact freely with teachers due to an ironclad policy prohibiting many forms of collaboration (Epstein & Sheldon, 2019; Rabinowitz et al., 2019); therefore, leaders developed equitable family partnerships to engage diverse families in the education process of their children (Epstein & Sheldon, 2019). Earlier, families of color were not involved in school matters, and schools did not officially invite them to engage in the education of their children (Coleman, 1966). As a result, the school performance of children of color was consistently lower than that of White children (Coleman, 1966).

The desegregation movement caused families of color to feel excluded from the decision-making processes in school, resulting in the relationship between schools and parents of color weakening, leading to mistrust and worsening the children's performance in school (Jones, 2018). For instance, Black children joined schools primarily serviced by White administrators and tutors unprepared to deal with their cognitive styles, social

values, beliefs, and traditions (Cramer et al., 2018). As a result, teachers taught students using a one-size-fits-all approach instead of incorporating strategies for multicultural families. Parents of color preferred home-schooling, as it was perceived to be more engaging and collaborative since the parents could monitor their children's academic progress (Jones, 2018).

Pena-Shaff et al. (2019) believed that cultures must be linked to education and implemented in classrooms. To achieve this link, the educators and community partners believed in the need for a collaborative approach involving the parents and school staff (Epstein & Salinas, 2004). Schools developed equitable family partnerships as a strategy that could help to address these problems. School leaders and teachers were then actively involved in implementing a collaborative approach involving parents and communities as interested parties in improving school performance (Epstein & Sheldon, 2019). In this case, parents could have a say in school matters relating to their children. As a result, an equitable family partnership was proposed by leaders, encouraging parent participation in their children's education at home and school (Epstein & Sheldon, 2019).

Over time, as the equitable family partnership program started to take root nationwide, it became apparent that it was a more effective school improvement strategy than previous attempts made by schools and communities to improve school performance (Berkowitz et al., 2021). The program, which aimed to increase the involvement of families in their children's education, provided teachers and parents an opportunity to engage regularly in educational work related to the children (Jacques & Villegas, 2018). It also provided parents with resources to empower themselves and be agents of change in their homes (Malluhi & Alomran, 2019).

Policy Mandates of Partnership and Equity

Equity is a right to differentiated educational opportunities, access to resources, and other supports for all students despite ethnic and racial differences in all curricula or learning experiences, including school assessment and attendance (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Many policies the government has formulated support the importance of parental engagement in the children's learning process. These policies include the Head Start Act; the Child Care and Development Block Grant; the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program; and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Education, 2016).

The Head Start Act outlines the importance of family involvement in children's learning and development (Koepp et al., 2022). The program emphasizes that parents are responsible for encouraging and supporting the growth and development of their children. Through parental engagement, children can develop a positive attitude towards education; thus, they can identify as participants in the learning process.

The Child Care and Development Block Grant prioritizes the need for promoting parental involvement in the learning and development process of children (Wilson, 2019). The law indicates that parents must play an important role as primary caregivers in their child's learning (Wilson, 2019). Parents should be allowed to provide a positive learning environment for their children and participate as active agents in the learning process by developing a partnership with the child-care facilities (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Education, 2016).

The Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program supports the desire and commitment of parents to play an active role in their children's learning by

engaging them in visit sessions; thus, parents can learn how to be more involved and effective as agents of change (Wilson, 2019). While the program emphasizes the need for parental involvement, it also provides resources for family-based health home visits to support the involvement.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act also supports parental engagement in the learning process of students with disabilities (Koepp et al., 2022). The law defines the role of parents as essential to successful learning experiences. It emphasizes that families ensure their children receive quality education services (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Education, 2016). The federal government supports the desire and willingness of parents to promote their children's learning by providing them with necessary resources such as free or affordable school meals, healthcare services, and nutritional programs to ensure adequate development within the home environment (Koepp et al., 2022).

Pedagogy on Diversity and Equality

Pedological approaches are applied to foster diversity and equality in the learning process. Cooperative learning, as one of the pedological approaches, helps students work as a team, thus contributing to the learning process. This approach helps break barriers among the students and promotes accountability as students can use their skills to work as a team (Schneider, 2018). Through cooperative learning, students can understand the concept of equality and diversity because as they interact, they discuss and understand how the group operates. Gillies (2016) noted that corporate learning promotes socialization and exposure to culture and differences. Active participation in the learning process is also important because it enables the learners to feel the subject's importance

and understand how they can apply it in their everyday lives (Schneider, 2018). This approach allows students to practice goal-directed behavior by identifying activities they can use in their personal lives.

Experiential learning is another approach to diversity and equality that students can demonstrate when they come with different experiences learned from outside as they discuss personal views and challenges (Schneider, 2018). Experiential learning can be encouraged when students are engaged in role-play activities that help them experience situations; thus, they can apply emotional responses and understand how others may feel. Fowler and Yamaguchi (2020) presented a coherent review of research that shows that significant benefits can arise from integrating culture-specific training with experiential learning.

Effective differentiation through regular assessment to assess the diverse needs of the different learners is also essential. It helps to realize the different learning needs of all learners and identify which learners are not on par to perform well because of their differences (Marschall & Shah, 2020). This approach helps to recognize and address the differences and allows students to relate theory and practice by reflecting on their learning experiences.

School Climate and Equity

School climate refers to the shared beliefs, values, and norms that characterize a school's environment and whether it provides a good setting that promotes academic excellence and student growth (Ihmeideh et al., 2020). School climate is affected by the social status of students and the quality of interactions among them (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018). A positive school climate can give students a sense of belonging,

pride, and achievement. A positive school climate also empowers teachers and provides opportunities to work collaboratively; it encourages student growth, learning, and development; it creates an environment where various learners can succeed (Ihmeideh et al., 2020). A negative school climate, however, can create a chain of negative attitudes and behaviors that result in inequity where the school fails to meet all students' needs (Dodd, 2017).

School climate influences equity in providing equitable access for all students to achieve excellence and growth (Herrera et al., 2020). For schools to be successful and establish positive school climates where educators can feel safe enough to teach with integrity, the organizational culture and climate must change for educators to feel more secure. Today, schools need a positive school climate in an unruly time—security issues, rising juvenile crime rates, unaffordable housing, and cutbacks in social services—and still operate within budget and provide essential services (Herrera et al., 2020); therefore, school leaders must foster a positive school climate to empower and support teachers, students, and parents (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018). They should demonstrate care and concern by knowing the emotional needs of all students to provide emotional support for the children (Garrick, 2018). Doing so will build a positive climate that encourages equity and removes the barriers that prevent students from succeeding.

Schools should focus on creating and sustaining a climate promoting meaningful student participation (Lareau, 2019). Meaningful participation will promote diversity as students from all backgrounds and those with physical and mental challenges can successfully participate in all activities. Creating multiple pathways helps meet the needs of different students, thus removing inequities (Herrera et al., 2020). Teachers and other

staff must know their students' social, emotional, and academic needs (Lareau, 2019). As we meet the needs of all students, we become more accepting of differences and build a positive school climate because it allows educators to promote an environment where every student feels accepted regardless of race, gender, or learning ability (Herrera et al., 2020). A positive school climate also allows teachers to know how to provide different learning strategies for each child, thus promoting equity for those who learn differently (Lareau, 2019). A school climate that embraces acceptance creates a setting where there is a sense of belonging regardless of a student's skills or talents; consequently, it creates an environment where all students have the opportunity to succeed.

A positive and supportive school climate can foster strong relationships. Darling-Hammond and Cook-Harvey (2018) noted that schools could achieve a positive and supportive climate by fostering a caring, culturally inclusive learning environment in which all students and families are respected. In this environment, students and families are free of societal identity threats that impede performance, and mutual respect and trust exist among staff, students, and families.

Theoretical Framework: Darling-Hammond Educational Equity

Darling-Hammond has been a driving force in educational equity for decades (DePaul, 2021). She has approximately 20 years of experience working not just in schools but also in schools with students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and children from diverse ethnicities and cultural backgrounds. Darling-Hammond (2010) reminded us that a significant aspect of educational equity is ensuring that all learners, regardless of the diversity of their backgrounds, have the opportunity to attain all that is possible at the end of K-12 education. Equal access to good learning conditions is

essential to educational equity (Cramer et al., 2018).

Darling-Hammond et al. (2019) viewed equal opportunity as a two-fold concept; it is an individual's right to be treated equally. It also ensures that each student has access to the same quality education. Darling-Hammond et al. believed that equal access would benefit society because it would develop individuals who can participate fully and intelligently. Schools can achieve equal access by providing each student with the same quality and relevant education (DePaul, 2021). Darling-Hammond is a proponent of holistic education, which she defined as promoting academic readiness, confidence in learning, and interpersonal/life skills (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). She has recently focused on how best to implement new models of teacher evaluation that ensure fairness and reliability in teacher quality decisions while holding teachers accountable for improving their instruction and student learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). The two transition teams promoted educational equity through collaborative research, policy development, and advocacy.

Theoretical Framework: Epstein's School, Family, and Community Partnerships Model

Epstein et al.'s (2019) framework outlines six types of parental involvement to assist school staff and parents in developing programs that enhance partnership. The six types of involvement include parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community (Epstein et al., 2019). Darling-Hammond's (2010) framework on educational equity strengthens Epstein et al.'s six types of involvement framework.

Parenting

Parenting entails the daily engagement of parents with their children and can include disciplining their children, monitoring learners' activities, and teaching and supervising them. Epstein (2011) noted that parenting as part of the framework entails helping all families build home environments supporting children as children. Parent education supports parents by providing enough support for their children by promoting conducive home environments for the learners (Epstein et al., 2019). Schools can offer courses to the parents, such as General Educational Development and family literacy (Malluhi & Alomran, 2019). Family support programs and home visits can assist families with services such as health and nutrition. Parenting is crucial in improving the learning process, as it enables parents to nurture their children's growth since nonsupportive parents can reduce student motivation and learning and encourage their disengagement, resulting in school failure and high dropout rates (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018). Studies have shown that proper parenting promotes the cognitive abilities and school readiness of children; in contrast, poor parenting negatively affects the performance of children despite having a good learning environment in school (Bariroh, 2018).

Also, parents must be involved in curriculum development to enhance school readiness (Epstein et al., 2019). Failure to establish good homes for children disrupts their academic concentration and causes them to lose interest in their learning process; thus, we should educate parents on the need to maintain suitable environments for their children at home (Bariroh, 2018).

Communicating

Communicating is vital in a parent's involvement in their child's life. Two-way communication benefits parents and teachers as it engages parents throughout the school year and allows practical cooperation between school and home (Epstein & Salinas, 2004). For this two-way communication to be effective, it must be equitable. Schools must cater to the specific needs of families, such as language or technology barriers, to update them on student progress, both academically and socially (Cherry, 2021).

Communicating is when teachers and parents share ideas to promote understanding. Effective communication emphasizes keeping parents updated on changes in educational standards, local school district policies and requirements, and remaining available for questions regarding their children's education (Cherry, 2021). By engaging in effective communication, parents and teachers can identify any barriers at school or home and work together to eliminate those barriers.

Communication is also about the school programs and the academic progress of children. Schools and families benefit because parent-teacher conferences are a way of helping parents understand many issues concerning their children's academic performance (Malluhi & Alomran, 2019). The conferences should be scheduled at least once yearly with each parent to discuss the children's academic progress. Schools can use various effective communication mediums, including newspapers, memos, notices, phone calls, student conferences, email, and website access for parents and staff members (Garrick, 2018). Schools must be able to communicate with parents to be aware of changes in school policies, requirements, and programs (Day & Dotterer, 2018). Communication can ease tensions due to parents not knowing about changes since

healthy development and learning rely on responsive, supportive connections and communication with caring adults (Darling-Hammond, 2010). In addition, schools can let parents know what will be taught in the class so they can plan their daily schedules accordingly (Day & Dotterer, 2018). Parent-teacher conferences are suitable for effective communication because they enable communication between teachers and parents about the school's policies on discipline issues and student academic progress (Epstein et al., 2019). The hallmark of communicating is that it directly affects the future of schools by presenting ideas on improving educational services and helping to create positive relations between schools and home (Epstein et al., 2019).

Volunteering

Volunteering as a parent includes participating in school and community activities that support and enhance the children's lives (Epstein et al., 2019). Volunteering involves recruiting and organizing parent help and support for the school by enabling parents to attend programs and activities organized by or for the school (Berkowitz et al., 2021). It is imperative because it provides parents with information about their children's learning and needs and how they can help them. Teachers can also organize and perform extracurricular activities in schools alone and not within their regular teaching duties (Epstein et al., 2019). They can involve sports, performing arts, art, and creative writing clubs. This way, volunteers can ensure the involvement of all parents regardless of needs so they can participate and therefore make more connections with their children.

Learning at Home

Learning at home includes parents being present for story time, reading stories, occasionally assisting children with homework, and teaching them basic skills for school

(Miller, 2019). Schools should provide families with information on how to help their children complete their homework and other curriculum activities, as well as decision-making and planning (Epstein et al., 2019). Through this framework, schools provide families with information on the skills children require in all subjects at different grades (Allen & White-Smith, 2018). Parents need to learn how to continue the teaching and learning process at home, as it will complement their children's learning in school. Teaching at home should be based on research from all angles, especially within their community and native language (Gross et al., 2022). Learning at home takes time for them to grasp everything taught in school, which helps parents teach their children effectively at home. Also, information on homework policies is provided to the families to help them understand how to monitor schoolwork at home. This way, parents can make better decisions on how to help their children complete their schoolwork at home (Allen & White-Smith, 2018).

Parents can also monitor and evaluate their children's academic progress since they can identify their weaknesses and additional strategies (Epstein et al., 2019). The role of parents in the learning process is not limited to creating awareness and helping students merely as caregivers; parents should also support students with problem-solving (Epstein & Salinas, 2004). By doing so, parents can make their children feel better by helping them resolve different problems they have set out to solve at home and after school (Epstein & Sheldon, 2019). Many children approach parents for help because they do not understand the material taught in school; thus, it is difficult to understand what the teacher has said when a teacher explains something. School performance monitoring involves achievement testing, curriculum evaluation, and assessment, which are all

critical. Performance monitoring and evaluation are essential because they help monitor school performance in educating students socially, emotionally, and academically (Allen & White-Smith, 2018). Effective learning environments promote children's growth in all areas of the school and its relationships at home and with the community (Cherry, 2021). A shared developmental framework between home and school and policies to ensure that students receive extra support for their social, emotional, or economic needs when they do are essential components of building a supportive environment (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018).

Decision-Making

Decision-making is an integral part of parental involvement. Parents are involved in the decision-making process to have a say in what goes on in their child's education (Epstein et al., 2019). According to most parents, this type of involvement gives them more control over what goes on in their child's classroom because they are more aware of what is happening than the school staff (Dettmers et al., 2019). Parents are involved in decision-making processes regarding school matters, such as selecting parent leaders and school representatives (Berkowitz et al., 2021). Another reason parents should be involved in decision-making is that they can give teachers valuable feedback that will improve their teaching (Dettmers et al., 2019). Decision-making is vital because it is an opportunity that makes parents feel involved in their children's education. For effective participation, schools should provide parents with a suitable communication medium through which they may seek necessary information and become active in the decision-making process (Berkowitz et al., 2021). To facilitate parent engagement, all teachers and administrators can create a culture where they see parents as valuable community

members and all children are considered part of the whole community (Epstein et al., 2019). Doing so demonstrates that schools are actively seeking ways to involve parents and work with them so they may get involved in their children's education. Decisions that require parents to be actively engaged include forming the Parent-Teachers Association or other parent organizations that help run the system (Ishimaru, 2019b).

Also, parent engagement is essential, especially on issues such as school rules, curriculum content, requirements, and student conduct. Parents can also share their beliefs and cultures to represent them in the school handbook. In decision-making, families should be involved at the school and higher levels, such as the district-level advisory councils and committees that affect school operations, including school improvement committees (Berkowitz et al., 2021). By including families in the decision-making process, schools can also foster stronger relationships of relational trust between teachers and families (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018).

Collaborating With the Community

Collaborating with the community involves coordinating resources and services for the families and students to provide services to the community (Berkowitz et al., 2021). Collaboration allows the school and parents to share information and experiences on children's education issues (Ishimaru, 2019a). This way, they can learn about community resources to support their children's education. The collaboration will also let them know their duties in serving their children socially and academically (Epstein et al., 2019). For effective collaboration, community organizations can provide students and families with information on community health, cultural, recreational, and social services and programs (Berkowitz et al., 2021). Schools should give students information that

links learning with community activities that may help nurture their talents and moral growth (Epstein et al., 2019). For instance, summer programs help enhance students' community connections and engage with other communities participating in the same activities (Berkowitz et al., 2021). Collaboration with communities and organizations to ensure an effective and relevant learning environment for students is also essential.

Public schools must collaborate with families because they play a vital role in teaching, parenting, supporting families, technology transfer, and literacy development programs (Epstein et al., 2019). Collaboration is essential because it helps to build partnerships between the school and community members to provide services to children, such as health care, recreation, and cultural activities (Jones, 2018). Additionally, it helps provide useful information to community members so they can become involved in their children's education (Jones, 2018).

These types of parental involvement are important because they engage parents with their children (Allen & White-Smith, 2018). They also help integrate and bring together their children's learning experiences meaningfully. In addition to engaging parents, this type of parental involvement encourages communication between parent and child; thus, it improves parent-child relationships, which are essential for child development and can prevent poor academic performance for the learners (Allen & White-Smith, 2018). One of the most effective ways to alter the course of a child's life is to personalize the educational environment so students can feel understood and supported (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018). Most parents prefer being involved in school programs because they can have input and make their child's education decisions, making them feel valued and respected as parents and helping them in their parenting duties

(Allen & White-Smith, 2018).

Importance of School and Family Partnerships

An equitable family partnership program can promote parents' inclusion in their children's educational progress. As a result, it can lead to identifying strategies that help create opportunities for the children to develop cognitive, social, emotional, and academic skills. Programs also promote diversity since the families are from different cultural, ethnic, and racial backgrounds (Berkowitz et al., 2021). As a result, schools can provide children with the capacity to think through various solutions when facing challenges in school (Malluhi & Alomran, 2019). Equity and inclusion are not just limited to the participation of societal members in education but also encompass the role of parents in their children's education; therefore, they promote the acceptance of all families by valuing diversity and recognizing its value in school communities.

Additionally, an equitable partnership program can support equal engagement for all families regardless of their ethnical and racial backgrounds (Malluhi & Alomran, 2019). These programs can also help identify barriers faced by children while learning. For instance, through equity and inclusion programs, the supportive role of parents in the education of children has been a great way to address the challenges and barriers children face at school and home (Berkowitz et al., 2021); hence, schools develop better strategies to address the challenges parents and teachers face. Since parents are also facilitators of these programs, they can adopt a role that helps them to support their children's aspirations of attending and completing school. As a result, students can actively participate in academic and social activities within the school. Undoubtedly, students who have received support from their parents tend to focus better on their work at school

(Allen & White-Smith, 2018).

The advantages of equitable family partnerships are real when schools and families work together to nurture relationships by focusing on common goals. Although there is a wealth of research on generalized family engagement efforts, many schools and districts want knowledge on how to engage all families equitably. Only recently has the concept of equity been pushed in some school districts. Jacques and Villegas (2018) published *Strategies for Equitable Engagement to partner with schools to improve school improvement plans by ensuring a focus on equity*. This equity-based approach empowers families to strengthen engagement systems (Latta, 2019).

Benefits of Engaging Parents

There are many benefits to engaging parents in schools. A parent's role in their children's academic progress generally involves school and home (Catsambis, 2001). Both are equally important in determining the academic performance of a child. The school plays a significant role in influencing a child's educational performance because it provides an environment for learning opportunities; therefore, teachers must recognize and appreciate the efforts of parents so they will be more responsive when giving feedback to students (Allen & White-Smith, 2018). Parental engagement is among the crucial aspects determining the academic excellence of children. It affects the ability of a student to perform in school; a higher degree of parental engagement highly impacts a child's academic performance (Gross et al., 2022).

Parents are more sensitive and responsive to meeting their children's social, intellectual, and emotional needs, which is essential in heightening their academic performance (Cherry, 2021). Consequently, the teachers receive support from the parents,

who help guide the children during the learning process. It is vital to acknowledge that parents play a role in influencing their children's attitudes and behaviors (Allen & White-Smith, 2018). Through parental support and encouragement, children can maintain a positive attitude toward education and conduct themselves orderly while in school. Parental involvement motivates children to develop positive attitudes and self-esteem, which facilitate their performance in school (Wheeler, 2019). Research studies have proven that students whose families are involved in the educational process are more likely to earn higher grades, graduate, achieve college, and acquire better job opportunities (Gross et al., 2022). Also, trust and confidence are developed between the school staff and parents because parents feel acknowledged when involved in their children's educational progress.

Barriers to Family Engagement

Implementing equitable family partnership efforts has faced several challenges that have hindered its effectiveness (Herrera et al., 2020). Barriers to parental engagement can be classified broadly to impact parents or family, students, parent-teachers, and societal factors (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). Regarding parents and families, one crucial factor that hinders engagement is parental disengagement, which is more associated with mental health issues and parenting stressors (Herrera et al., 2020). A disengaged parent acts emotionally distant, provides little supervision, sets no expectations, and does not attend school events, including parent-teacher conferences (Cherry, 2021). As parents deal with the stresses of life itself, they sometimes become overwhelmed and shift their focus from the child to their stressors. A low level of parental education and understanding of the needs and developmental stages of children

is another crucial factor that prevents the effective engagement of parents in their children's educational process (Cherry, 2021). Studies prove that a low level of parental education causes parents to lack enough interest in following up on their children's academic progress (Allen & White-Smith, 2018).

Low parental involvement in school matters since parents can feel left out; thus, they cannot fully engage in school matters (Hirano et al., 2018). Financial problems are another familial factor that causes parents to lack sufficient capacity to meet school demands essential for parental engagement. Also, a lack of structural support for parents hinders parental engagement. Family support services are essential for the self-efficacy of parents and guidance for better parenting practices (Herrera et al., 2020).

Although societal factors have less impact on parental engagement, several factors can impede the program's success (Hirano et al., 2018). For instance, economically disadvantaged communities have low parental involvement in school matters (Wilson, 2019). Cultural and socioeconomic differences also hinder successful parental involvement in school programs (Lareau, 2019). For school programs to be successful, there must be support for these parents to provide their children with an environment conducive to learning (Davies, 2000). Poor parental involvement in schools with high-poverty concentrations and minority enrollments is due to the parent's inability to fully comprehend and support the school's instructional program, organizational structure, and curriculum (Lareau, 2019).

The attitudes of parents toward school are another factor that may hinder effective parental involvement (Cherry, 2021). The negative attitudes of families toward schools and their unwillingness to support school programs cause them to disengage from

involvement; thus, low parental involvement is observed (Lechuga-Peña & Brisson, 2018). Unemployment and low levels of education also contribute to this lack of participation. The environmental challenges of families at home reduce the opportunities for parents to interact with their children and positively influence their education, which is an essential foundation for sustained parental involvement at school (Lechuga-Peña & Brisson, 2018). These challenges also determine how much time a parent has available to get involved; thus, a lack of adequate time to commit to school programs causes most parents not to be involved in school matters.

Of the barriers considered, staff attitude toward the parents is also critical in determining parental involvement (Ihmeideh et al., 2020). Sometimes, teachers do not see the parents as essential to the success of school programs. The low parental involvement at schools with high poverty levels adds to this lack of teacher support; thus, teachers will not encourage parents to become involved in the school programs (Cherry, 2021). For instance, if teachers perceive the parents as noncommittal, they will be less inclined to include them in school matters (Ihmeideh et al., 2020). These factors negatively impact student achievement and affect how well the schools meet their obligations.

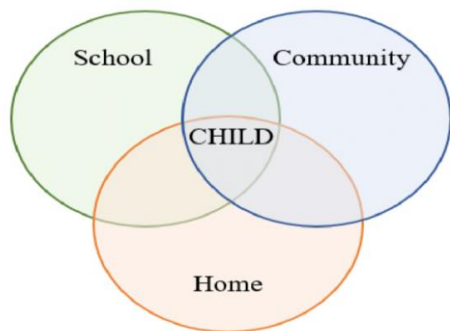
Overlapping Spheres of Influence

Epstein et al.'s (2019) multidimensional approach demonstrated the importance of a relationship between family, school, and community in a child's growth and education. According to Epstein et al., while collaboration across all three domains does not always and inevitably lead to success, the multidimensional approach should be the driving force to spark intrinsic drive in children to achieve success. The overlapping spheres show the child being the center of the overlap between school, family, and community. Figure 4

shows the overlapping spheres of influence.

Figure 4

Overlapping Spheres of Influence



The overlapping spheres of influence posited that collective school, home, and community efforts positively influence student learning (Epstein et al., 2019). Even though the advantages of the overlap promote increased student achievement, the extent of parental participation also directly impacts success. In addition to the overlapping domain, Epstein et al. (2019) proposed a paradigm for effective and fair participation. This framework aided educators in developing a complete program that enhances school, family, and community cooperation initiatives (Epstein et al., 2019).

Partnership to Support Families

While many barriers may hinder successful parental engagement at school, one of the reasons why parental engagement is important is because it provides a sense of continuity for a child's education (Lareau, 2019). The four most effective building blocks adapted to promote partnership between families and staff include providing family-centered care, effective communication, empathy, and respect for diversity (Lowenhaupt & Montgomery, 2018). Regarding family-centered care, parents should be encouraged to participate and provide input that is significant to the development of their children. As

for effective communication, timely, clear, and supportive communication is key to achieving a partnership between parents and staff (Aranda-Balboa et al., 2020). Also, teachers should communicate effectively with parents to build collaboration with them. Empathy is also essential as teachers must understand their students' cultures and family backgrounds to effectively cater to their children's needs (Aranda-Balboa et al., 2020). The trust built based on empathy will enable teachers and school staff members to communicate constructively, which is essential in building a partnership with their students' families. Respect for diversity is fundamental in creating a partnership between families and school staff (Lowenhaupt & Montgomery, 2018). Teachers and school staff should promote their appreciation of diversity to build partnerships with parents from different cultural backgrounds. Also, teachers should communicate with families from diverse cultural backgrounds to effectively communicate with parents of students from other cultural groups.

Partnership to Support Students

School-family-community partnerships are required to improve the academic outcomes of students since they provide the collaborative support needed by the students (Vinopal, 2018). Studies show that partnerships among the school staff, family, and community enhance student academic performance by improving the learning conditions, motivating students to attend school, and earning higher grades (Davies, 2000). To achieve more effective learning outcomes, schools often depend on a partnership between school staff, families, and communities to improve children's chances of success (Vinopal, 2018). Research has shown that tutors and coaches at the school are more effective when they are part of a collaborative partnership with the school community

(Lowenhaupt & Montgomery, 2018). Partnerships will help parents support their child's educational goals (Hamlin & Flessa, 2018). The benefits of partnerships between school, family, and community members are becoming more important as they enable positive interactions among individuals in these groups. For example, partnerships provide opportunities for teachers to interact with community-based agencies since such agencies usually serve educationally disadvantaged children (Hamlin & Flessa, 2018). Community support is fundamental for teachers to understand the resources available for educationally disadvantaged children. Students benefit because the teachers understand their students' living and social conditions (Lowenhaupt & Montgomery, 2018). Community agencies might be able to provide services like health care and mental health care that can help students achieve their academic goals.

Partnership to Support School

Partnership to support the school entails programs and activities conducted by families and the community to equip the school with enough resources to sustain effective student learning (Munje & Mncube, 2018). Families can partner with community organizations to provide specific resources for the school, including churches, government organizations, commercial businesses, small businesses, and other organizations. The teachers and the school provide this comprehensive support to help facilitate student academic performance. Parental involvement is one factor that influences student academic performance (Catsambis, 2001). Families play an important role in this case because they are the ones who can initiate, develop, and maintain a partnership in support of the school (Munje & Mncube, 2018). Through healthy parenting, children develop a positive attitude towards schooling and high self-esteem;

thus, the learning process is easier for the teachers in school. Individuals with high self-esteem who regard themselves as competent tend to be more committed to succeeding than those with low self-esteem who feel less self-worth (Munje & Mncube, 2018).

Since teachers play an important role in student success, a partnership should be established with them so they have a positive outlook toward exploring new ideas and methods that would help students learn better (Hamlin & Flessa, 2018). The partnership must provide them recognition to enhance their skills, opportunities to attend seminars and workshops on teaching strategies, and to improve their work environment, such as providing a conducive classroom for learning (Cripps & Zyromski, 2015).

Additionally, getting students involved in extracurricular activities is important for improving their academic performance (Antony-Newman, 2019). Self-esteem is a factor that influences the level of commitment to various extracurricular activities like sports and student organizations, which will help improve their academic performance (Jensen, 2009). Students who are actively engaged and dedicated have a higher level of self-esteem than those who are not; hence, they perform better in school (Antony-Newman, 2019). Participation in sports significantly contributes to the success of students in academics, as it develops leadership skills and human values that affect every aspect of life (Wretman, 2017). Engaging in extracurricular activities not only strengthens their physique but teaches them how to be compliant and committed, which positively reflects on their disposition and daily lives (Antony-Newman, 2019).

Family Engagement Strategies

Schools should implement strategies to promote successful parental engagement in any program geared towards equitable engagement (Lechuga-Peña & Brisson, 2018).

The first strategy is to educate parents by providing parenting classes, seminars, or workshops. Compared to parents with limited education, educating parents can be a highly impactful strategy that significantly contributes to their child's education (Lechuga-Peña & Brisson, 2018). Furthermore, the parents will better understand what their child is learning in school. Providing training and incentives to parents will help them better appreciate the activities that lead to parental engagement (Epstein et al., 2019). The positive attitudes and enthusiasm of teachers towards the program also play a vital role in parent and student participation, commitment, and support (Lechuga-Peña & Brisson, 2018).

Open communication is another strategy that enhances successful parental involvement (Epstein, 2011). Effective communication between parents and the school lets both parties be informed and relate better, resulting in a greater understanding of roles, responsibilities, interests, and expectations (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Lechuga-Peña & Brisson, 2018). In turn, parents feel acknowledged; hence, they become willing to be involved in school activities. Effective parental engagement may also require community member involvement, especially child-oriented ones. Involvement from these groups will create a platform for information transfer about child-rearing practices, which are beneficial in helping parents and children develop sound health beliefs and practices (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018).

Data-Driven Strategic School Improvement

Collecting and analyzing data on the needs of students and their families is a key component of education systems because effective data collection and analysis help identify specific needs and develop sustainable approaches that can help address the

identified needs (Hamlin & Flessa, 2018). Lack of data in schools causes the management to fail to identify the needs of students and their families; thus, teachers cannot develop strategies to help improve problems (Miller, 2019). Teachers should keep student records to monitor the learning progress of children. Student progress should be measured through different indicators such as attendance and class work, leading to the purpose of having individualized records for each student. Teachers will analyze student data to develop and monitor student learning progress (Miller, 2019). Providing these data could effectively manage student needs and create an individualized parent engagement plan. Additional data to develop this individualized plan include student pass/fail rates, discipline referrals, attendance, teacher notes, grade point averages, and class assignment scores, among many others (Hamlin & Flessa, 2018). Analysis of these data guides teachers on the plans to improve the academic performance of learners.

Types of Partnerships and Examples of Successful Partnerships

Family-school partnership is a school's cooperative and collaborative relationship with families (Epstein et al., 2019). Parents, teachers, and administrators work together in a school community to provide a quality education for every child. Families should be welcomed at schools as partners and encouraged to be actively involved in deciding what happens there, not just waiting for information or instructions from the school staff. A successful partnership is shared decision-making, a comprehensive view of school issues, knowledge of parent beliefs and values, shared responsibility for learning, communication between school staff and parents, and mutual respect for the contributions of all members of the partnership (Hakyemez-Paul et al., 2018).

Community partnership involves the broader community in supporting and

developing children's educational activities (Epstein & Salinas, 2004). Individuals from the community can partner with teachers to provide mentorship to students and quality learning environments (Miller, 2019).

Professional education partnership involves the collaboration of professionals (teachers, staff, parents, and administrators) to provide quality learning experiences for school children. Teachers and administrators collaborate with others to design programs that encompass learning and teaching (Catsambis, 2001). The success of a professional education partnership is creating a value-driven culture where all partners work together to enjoy the benefits of collaborative relationships (Hakyemez-Paul et al., 2018). This relationship involves collaboration, mutual respect, and equality among professionals.

Benefits for Students

Higher academic achievements and learning motivation benefit students because they provide children with a more attractive and fun learning environment (Vinopal, 2018). Also, they amplify parental involvement in student learning because of the increased collaboration with teachers. The support from parents strengthens the student-teacher relationship, which increases achievement rates and improves teaching quality (Jacques & Villegas, 2018). Also, students gain a positive attitude towards education in the family-school setting and develop a sense of belonging and pride in their school (Gross et al., 2022). With positive relationships with their parents, students eventually develop better self-esteem because they feel loved and appreciated (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). Similarly, the partnership benefits students by decreasing the drop-out rate and increasing student retention (Gross et al., 2022).

Benefits for School

Benefits for schools include more funding from the government due to students meeting achievement goals and more grant opportunities to implement programs that benefit the students and teachers (Marchand et al., 2019). Schools can also reduce teacher turnover rates and increase student achievement due to parental involvement (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). They can also collaborate with parents to create community events, activities, and fundraising opportunities to support student learning activities. Schools can also provide better working conditions for the school staff as they benefit from the support of the parents who enhance student discipline. Finally, improved student attendance and parental involvement increase participation in school events (Marchand et al., 2019).

Transformational Leadership and Individual Roles in Partnerships

Transformational leaders have the power to inspire, influence change, encourage, challenge thinking, and be the cheerleader everyone requires. Crane (2002) noted that transformational leaders must nurture a positive culture in which mutual accountability, truthfulness, willingness to learn, and ongoing communication are encouraged to promote a vision of equitable partnerships within the school environment. Employees who work in an encouraging and open workplace culture where they are encouraged to make decisions on partnerships and trusted to carry out their responsibilities are more likely to be engaged at work and, as a result, less likely to leave the organization (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2017).

Role of Administrators

Administrators promote equitable family partnerships through collaborative

relationships and effective communication (Lopez, 2017). A collaborative relationship between the administrators and other stakeholders is a significant stepping stone for an effective partnership (Malluhi & Alomran, 2019). By establishing a collaborative relationship with parents, the administrators will be well-equipped to develop educational programs that promote student health and wellness. Effective communication between the administrators, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders promotes equitable family partnerships, thus enhancing the program's success (Epstein et al., 2019). Formulation of policies that guide the school programs is another vital role. The administrators should be able to explain or make the policies understandable and feasible. Policies should be genuine, not just procedures teachers or parents must abide by without understanding (Aranda-Balboa et al., 2020). Every policy should ensure quality education at all levels, improve student achievement and well-being, give direction towards efficiently using school resources, and foster parent-teacher partnership and effective stakeholder communication (Davis, 2017).

Role of Teachers

Teachers should ensure effective communication with the parents to provide sufficient information to understand their role as active partners in their children's education (Malluhi & Alomran, 2019). Teachers play a huge role in promoting partnerships with parents by providing information on student performance, suggestions on how to look out for their children's educational needs, and prompt feedback. Parent and teacher conferences are common practices teachers should follow to enhance parent-teacher partnerships and effective communication (Epstein et al., 2019).

Teachers should make parents feel valuable to the school and that their

involvement is important (Cherry, 2021). Parents must take an active role in their children's education; thus, they must be well informed on their child's learning, health, and social development (Aranda-Balboa et al., 2020). Teachers should provide the necessary information to participate in the daily educational process.

Role of Student and Family

The parents need to know what and how much they can contribute to their child's education. They should be aware of aspects related to the basics of the education system, curriculum, policies, guidance, career and family planning, health, safety, and welfare (Malluhi & Alomran, 2019). Knowing those aspects of the child's educational experience enhances effective engagement since teachers update parents with school affairs and make them aware of their roles. The school must support parents as stakeholders in their children's education (Dodd, 2017). Parents should also support the teachers by promoting the children's discipline through proper parenting. This way, they should help teachers guide the pupils to become more productive learners.

Students should have a sense of being part of the whole school community, with the school's reputation and development being their concern (Aranda-Balboa et al., 2020). Students should create and promote a better learning environment for their teachers and peers. Students can join clubs or organizations related to the field they are interested in. Children must participate in their studies to gain independence, confidence, responsibility, and maturity. They should study hard to get high scores to succeed in their future academic lives (Malluhi & Alomran, 2019). Teachers can help them by encouraging participation in class activities. By doing this, they become more involved in their studies, and as a result, they will develop better reading, writing, and numerical

skills. It is also important for students to get along in an environment that promotes harmonious relationships among students and teachers.

Summary

Schools and districts have begun to recognize the importance of equitable parental engagement in school programs and have attempted to implement an array of initiatives to increase parental participation in their children's education. While it was not so evident at first, equitable family partnerships are more valuable than any other strategies used in the past due to their ability to transform schools into learning communities (Cramer et al., 2018). Equitable family partnerships help schools build strong relationships with families through the shared visions of educators, parents, and children; this arrangement leads to more commitment, trust, and participation by all stakeholders involved. With these collaborative arrangements in place, commitment at the school level is higher, which results in stronger partnerships between students, their parents, and educators; however, as supported by research, it is insufficient for school programs to provide a means for partnership between parents and educators without regard for each family's needs and characteristics. Adhering to equity-based partnerships can enhance student academic excellence (Cramer et al., 2018).

Chapter 3: Methodology

This research utilized an explanatory sequential mixed method design with a phenomenological approach to examine stakeholder perceptions of parental engagement and equitable family partnerships. This chapter presents the course of action to align the research question with the comparative phenomenological research design. This chapter discusses a rationale for the sample size, participant selection, methods of confidentiality and anonymity, ethical considerations, and limitations. This chapter also provides data collection and analysis procedures, thoroughly examining limitations and delimitations. As I focused on the real-life experiences of internal and external stakeholders, I aimed to describe and reveal their perceptions using a phenomenological approach.

Phenomenological research aims to understand how individuals interpret life events, free of hypotheses or preconceptions from the researcher. It demands the researcher describe the lived experiences objectively while evaluating the findings in light of the current theories on the phenomena (Bliss, 2016). I strived to characterize the structure of the phenomena as precisely as possible through the lens of the participants. As I conducted this study, I left aside my biases and a priori assumptions while concentrating primarily on the current experience.

Restatement of Purpose

This research sought to provide holistic insight by uncovering the internal and external combined perceptions of stakeholders regarding equitable parental engagement to establish a protocol for individualized support. There is a need to improve the quality of parent-school partnerships so all students have equitable opportunities for success. Creating a culture of inclusivity that boosts parental involvement, family engagement,

and equity should be the goal of an educational institution (Cramer et al., 2018). Research has revealed strong, reliable, and persuasive evidence supporting the positive correlation between student achievement and family engagement (Catsambis, 2001; Davies, 2000; Duncan, 2019; Epstein, 2011; Wheeler, 2019). Schools must recognize the importance of an individualized approach when partnering with parents while providing equitable efforts in building and sustaining those partnerships. I used the following questions to guide this research.

1. How do the perceptions of internal and external stakeholders' experiences of equitable family engagement in this school differ?
2. What barriers do stakeholders believe are most problematic in building and sustaining equitable family partnerships?
 - a. Internal Stakeholders
 - b. External Stakeholders
3. What solutions do stakeholders see as ways to individualize family engagement?
 - a. Internal Stakeholders
 - b. External Stakeholders

I have gained insight into the varying perspectives and found commonalities and differences in answering these questions. Also, I have used the data from this research to identify challenges faced by families and suggest ways to break down barriers to strengthen the partnership practices at the site. The literature shows the importance of educational equity and school and family partnerships. Parental engagement determines the academic performance of children (Gross et al., 2022). The results of this study will

provide leaders with the tools to redesign partnership plans to overcome barriers of an individualized approach since research shows the powerful link between school and family partnerships. The findings of this research will also contribute to the knowledge base while influencing the decision-making process.

Research Design and Approach

This research uses an explanatory sequential mixed method design with a phenomenological approach to investigate the concern of equitable parent and family engagement. A phenomenological study is a qualitative research technique that investigates and characterizes a phenomenon to its core (Rodriguez & Smith, 2018). The method explored people's ordinary experiences while withholding the researchers' prior notions about the phenomena. In other words, phenomenological research investigates lived experiences to better understand how individuals interpret such experiences. Since stakeholder perceptions were the underlying foundational data collected for this research, I employed a phenomenological study design to investigate the phenomenon of equitable family partnerships. An explanatory sequential mixed method design with a phenomenological approach is descriptive. According to Maxwell (2005), a descriptive study can provide information about a group's attitudes, behaviors, and other characteristics. This study design was also cross-sectional. A cross-sectional study involves a one-time interaction with the participants, where data are collected once. I examined the participant's descriptions once and organized them intentionally into meaningful statements since collecting those meanings is crucial to constructing the researched phenomena. A phenomenological approach is employed when little is available about a topic, and the research aims to clarify and explain the most crucial

significance of a phenomenon from the viewpoint of individuals directly associated with it (Giorgi, 1995).

This study design permits researchers to characterize the meaning of the participants' personal experiences with equitable parental engagement (Creswell, 2014). An explanatory sequential mixed method design with a phenomenological approach was appropriate for this study because this approach is particularly good at highlighting perceptions from the participants' unique experiences. Phenomenological studies can also provide data as this methodology is flexible, allowing participants to freely express their thoughts and ideas without judgment and limitations (Bliss, 2016). Essentially, phenomenological studies assess the organization of many experiences, including perception, thinking, recall, imagination, passion, motivation, decisions, physical awareness, and social engagement (Rodriguez & Smith 2018).

The data enhance leaders' attempts to engage families. I explored the entities connected to the issue and relied on perspectives while incorporating structures of phenomenology. This study will contribute to the literature by providing information on an individualized approach to equitable partnerships that schools and districts can use to improve their partnership efforts.

Research Site

The study occurred in a school district with the pseudonym Orchid County Schools. The district is located in the southeastern region of North Carolina and serves a population of 36,227 people. Orchid County Schools has one high school, one early college, two middle schools, five elementary schools, one primary school, and an alternative school. The total student enrollment of the district is 5,592; 2,573 students in

Grades K-5, 1,425 students in Grades 6-8, 1,383 students in Grades 9-12, and 211 students at the early college.

The focus site was given the pseudonym Rose High School, the only high school in the district, serving 1,313 students from varying racial backgrounds. Table 1 shows the most recent demographic chart for the student population at the research site.

Table 1

Student Demographics of Rose High School for 2021-2022

Race	Number	Percentage
American Indian	206	15.40%
Asian	14	0.80%
Black	630	46.00%
Hispanic	29	2.80%
Native Hawaiian	2	0.80%
White	413	29.70%
Two or more Races	19	4.50%

Note. Summary report obtained from NC Star comprehensive plan report.

Within the varying racial groups, there are various cultural backgrounds. Of the 46% Black population of students, cultural backgrounds include first- and second-generation Caribbean and African heritage. The site also contains 15.40% of American Indian students of varying tribes with different cultures.

Participants

I used purposeful sampling to select participants for the interviews and a survey. In purposeful sampling, participants are carefully selected based on specific criteria or knowledge of the investigated issue. Purposeful sampling enhances the possibility of generalizing the results to a broader population, the trustworthiness of the results, and the management of bias (Guetterman, 2015). I used purposeful sampling to determine

selection criteria based on inclusion and exclusion measures to determine the most logical sources of internal and external stakeholder perceptions to gather in-depth information with fidelity. The study population of the internal stakeholders included subject teachers, counselors, school social workers, administrators, and district personnel who are directly involved with students and families. It was feasible to assume that these stakeholders would be rich sources of information and well-equipped to share their experiences. This population excluded teaching assistants, substitute teachers, and other roles without direct communication with families. The study population of the external stakeholders included parents and guardians but excluded community organizations since they only play a supportive role and do not directly determine what goes on in the school.

A total of 92 internal stakeholders were eligible to participate in this research since they met the criteria for participation discussed in the previous paragraph. This group included all four principals, 70 classroom teachers, principal and assistant principals, four counselors, one social worker, and 13 special education teachers. All families and guardians of students currently enrolled in the school were also eligible to participate in the research as external stakeholders. Based on this expectation, 26 internal and 21 external stakeholders participated in the survey. There is philosophical disagreement and practical difficulty surrounding the selection of an appropriate sample size in phenomenological research (Tracy, 2020). Ideally, researchers agree that the number of participants in a survey should be at least 20 and five to 10 for interviews to reach saturation (Creswell, 2014; Saunders et al., 2017). Saturation is the criterion for discontinuing data collection/analysis (Saunders et al., 2017). In other words, saturation is the point at which analyzing new data sets will not result in finding new information

that will add more value to the research topic. Using the notion of saturation as a foundation of this research, I relied on previous evidence-based research to precisely determine the saturation point.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

Before I collected any data, I obtained approval from the Instructional Review Board (IRB). This step ensured that the participants and site were protected and that I upheld ethical considerations. I will explain the ethical considerations for this research in the next section.

The first phase of data collection was to investigate the perceptions of internal and external stakeholders regarding equitable family engagement and partnership. I used an open-ended survey to answer this research question to gain specific information regarding both groups' knowledge, attitudes, or actions. A copy of the survey instrument is in Appendix A. I sent an invitation email to staff and parents upon approval from the district. A copy of the email is in Appendix C. I informed participants about the use of the data and their right to opt out of the survey. I reassured them that participation was optional and the data collected would be anonymous. Within the invitation letter, I outlined the benefits of participating in the survey, including helping to provide evidence-based data to inform practices at the site and helping to contribute to the field of educational research. Upon completing the survey, I asked participants to provide their contact information if they wanted to participate in an interview; this section of the data collection process was kept confidential. If they did not wish to participate, they were not allowed to disclose their contact details; hence, anonymity was maintained.

The survey determined the effectiveness of the current engagement practices and

identified gaps within the current plan. It was necessary to send the same survey to both groups of participants to obtain a comparative analysis of data. The survey items asked for personal experiences about equitable parent engagement based on characteristics of Epstein et al.'s (2019) family engagement framework and levels of influence.

There were three sections to the survey. The first section contained two demographic items, which sought to discover the current role of the participant as well as the number of years the participant was associated with the site. The second section of the survey consisted of five open-ended items to determine participant perceptions regarding family engagement, equity, and ways to improve engagement at the site. Participants were allowed to write their answers to each question. The last section consisted of 19 items using the 4-point Likert scale that ranges between strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The questions in this section gathered information on the current status of the family engagement plan and identified gaps.

The second data collection phase identified additional barriers to equitable engagement while identifying ways to bridge the gaps. Participants who chose to participate were narrowed down by purposeful sampling so I could interview five internal and five external stakeholders who fit the criteria discussed in the previous section. I aligned the interview questions with the research questions. During the interview, I reminded participants about confidentiality. I reassured them that I would not use any personal identification. I requested participants' permission to use a recording device for accuracy before the interview and to make transcripts. I stored all data collected from the interview on my drive for safety. I used the interview protocol Creswell and Creswell (2018) outlined. The protocol included instructions for the interviewee to follow, an ice-

breaker section with three questions, seven questions to uncover participant perceptions, and a recommendation section with two questions.

I designed the survey and interview, so my supervisor vetted the items before the actual study during an expert pilot study. A pilot study serves as a trial and quality control step. The goals of a pilot study are to identify problems in the research design, identify issues with the sampling technique, check the working conditions of instruments, and provide an estimate of the time for completion of both tools (Tracy, 2020).

Data Analysis

A study design varies, as does the need for distinct data analysis methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I analyzed the data using an inductive coding approach since it requires organizing and interpreting data. The inductive procedure includes going back and forth between the themes. As I analyzed the data, I read in great detail to become familiar with every nuance of the data. I explored insights, opinions, and experiences within this phenomenological research. I used a three-step approach to complete my analysis during this research phase. I read, compared, and interpreted the data for this three-step approach.

I read and familiarized myself during the first stage to fully understand the data. During this step, I did content and thematic analysis of the raw data to understand what the participants were saying from their perspectives. I also tried to identify themes not present in the data and subtleties while aligning those themes with Epstein et al.'s (2019) constructs. To achieve this, I used codes and tags to label quotes to support arguments and help answer research questions while identifying outliers to frame my conceptual framework. During the second stage, I compared data from the internal stakeholders with

external stakeholders to identify differences, similarities, and justifications. Last, I constructed meaning from the data during the interpretation step. I narrowed the codes to a meaningful list to create higher-level themes to achieve this step.

As I analyzed the Likert portion of the survey, I assigned a point value to each response: never=1, rarely=2, sometimes=3, often=3, frequently=4. I used the data to make a bar chart for each question.

The overarching aim of the data analysis was to use the data to answer the research questions. Table 2 provides an alignment of the research questions with the research instruments.

Table 2*Data Alignment Table*

Research Question	Instrument
1. How do the perceptions of internal and external stakeholders' experiences of equitable family engagement in this school differ?	Survey Section B – Items 1, 2 Interview Section B – Items 1, 2, 3
2. What barriers do stakeholders believe are most problematic in building and sustaining equitable family partnerships?	Survey Section C – Items 1-22 Interview Section B – Items 5, 6, 7
a. Internal Stakeholders	
b. External Stakeholders	
3. What solutions do stakeholders see as ways to individualize family engagement?	Survey Section B – Items 3, 4 Interview Section B – 4 Section C – 1, 2
a. Internal Stakeholders	
b. External Stakeholders	

The alignment table shows the alignment of the research questions with each data collection protocol. I analyzed multiple data sources to answer each research question since data collected from the interview and the survey can answer each question. The data collected from the interview and survey were analyzed using thematic coding and comparative analysis. I thoroughly examined the data during thematic coding to reveal recurring themes, subjects, notions, or patterns of meaning. I also compared perspectives from both internal and external stakeholders.

Role of the Researcher

I was employed as a science teacher at the site. I have completed 15 years of service as a science teacher, 7 years completed internationally and 8 years at the site. I

have worked closely with the previous assistant principal on various committees and roles within the science department. Under his leadership, I saw the need to promote equitable partnership efforts with families with an individualized approach. I was responsible for all data collection, analysis, and presentation of results in this study. I designed the instruments and conducted the interview myself. I also made myself aware of my biases so I would think objectively.

Ethical, Reliability, and Validity Considerations

Today, problems including the validity and reliability of the study's findings, the role of researchers in cross-cultural settings, and issues of privacy rights are possible ethical concerns (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As the researcher, I had to safeguard the study subjects; cultivate a trust-based relationship with them; maintain the integrity of the study; defend against dishonesty or impropriety that might reflect negatively on the school and district; and deal with novel, difficult situations that may arise. To mitigate those concerns, I was able to anticipate and tackle any potential ethical concerns in the study.

The first consideration I made was to clarify the purpose of the research. I eliminated deception by ensuring the participants understood the study's purpose clearly and fully before beginning the data collection process. I restated the purpose of the study at the beginning of the interview session and the beginning of the survey document. I asked participants to say that they fully understood the purpose of the research. I also ensured the language used was not open to misinterpretation, no matter the participants' educational background.

The second consideration was confidentiality and anonymity. The survey was

anonymous, while the interview was confidential. I informed the participants about the information I was collecting from them; I explained the nature of the data collection and assured the participants that I would protect their identities.

The third consideration was respect for participants and the research site. I respected all participants by becoming aware of their age, gender, cultural or language background, and any other status that might impact my ability to talk to them. I ensured a translator would be present if interviews were with Spanish-speaking families. I obtained appropriate permission from the school district to conduct the research at the site while ensuring the confidentiality of the data and retracting any identifiable information to identify the participants, the research site, and the school district. As discussed in the previous section, I highlighted the benefits for the organization and the individuals involved.

The fourth consideration was sensitive interview interaction. I asked participants for their informed consent to participate in the interview. I informed participants of their right to terminate their involvement in the research at any time. If the participants became uncomfortable, I told them I would immediately stop the interview and disregard the data collected from that session.

The fifth consideration was data accuracy. The leading principle to data accuracy is honesty. Honesty is fundamental to all research. I was honest about the data, the findings, and the research methods.

The sixth consideration was eliminating bias. I eliminated procedural bias by conducting an expert pilot study before the actual research to reduce errors in the research instruments. I was objective during the data collection and analysis to eliminate personal

bias.

The seventh consideration was the repercussions and misuse of the results. I informed participants about confidentiality and the intended use of the data collected from the survey and interview. I received permission from the participants to use their data and ensured them that I would keep their data confidential while collecting, analyzing, and reporting it. The data I collected from the site were only used for this research and will not be used again for any other purpose.

The eighth consideration was using a second coder and performing member checking. Using a second coder and performing member checking with the participants allowed me to reduce the possibility of researcher bias in this study. When multiple coders analyze and interpret the data, the range of developed themes and our understanding of their characteristics and linkages increase (Tracy, 2020). More than one coder may be able to help prevent this lens from obscuring participant perceptions and provide a different view. Finding areas of disagreement among coders was also helpful for finding codes that were not adequately well-defined, leading to more conceptual clarity and a stronger analysis. Last, using multiple coders helped to assure classification consistency and reduce measurement error. Member check email is in Appendix D.

The last consideration was plagiarism. I claimed credit for my work and gave credit to others' work. I properly acknowledged sources by using in-text citations and references to the work at the end of the document.

Limitations

This research study had various limitations. My research findings may not be generalizable to other schools in the district or other school districts, which was a

limitation of my study. Although future decisions on how to strengthen equitable partnerships may ultimately lead to improved student engagement and accomplishment at the site based on the findings of this research, I cannot generalize the findings to other groups. In an explanatory sequential mixed method design with phenomenological approach research, the transferability of results is not an aim (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). All schools are different, whether in demographics, age group of students, qualifications of teachers, or diversity of staff and students. My role is to prove that the data might be relevant while explicitly connecting to the cultural and social contexts surrounding data collection, not to prove transferability. The lack of transferability of this study's conclusions is of no significance. Nonetheless, since the environment at the site may be similar to those in other schools, leaders may view this study as a useful starting point for discussing the implementation of an individualized equity plan in their schools, thereby transferring the value of this study to other locations.

Through purposeful sampling, I determined the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Regardless of the data collection strategy, researcher bias is particularly prevalent in purposeful sampling. The notion is that a sample is established based on the researcher's discretion and individual assessment of the data, hence a limitation of this study. The perspectives of all stakeholders who participated in this study were beneficial. They provided some light on the gap in practice at the school regarding equitable partnership with an individualized approach. In addition, it was reasonable to believe that I could utilize the survey and interview data to construct an accurate depiction of the environment at the site, which school officials can use in decision-making about how to promote equitable partnerships at the school.

Delimitations

The first delimitation was regarding the sampling procedure. The participants of this research were selected using purposeful sampling, which allowed me to identify inclusion and exclusion criteria for participation. Although random sampling would have been a more accurate method, I used purposeful sampling because of the nature of this research. It was important to use purposeful sampling since this research aimed to collect and analyze data based on perception. To collect the most accurate data, participants with first-hand knowledge were the most appropriate; hence, purposeful sampling was used.

The second delimitation was that the scope and purpose of the study were limited to one site in the district. Although the data collected may be transferable to other schools with similar characteristics, it is not generalizable. A representative population sample must have taken part in the study for the results to be generalizable to a larger group.

Summary

This study aimed to better understand the drawbacks to equitable family engagement as experienced by internal and external stakeholders and to identify barriers and strategies to improve the implementation of an individualized approach to family engagement. To facilitate this inquiry, I conducted a phenomenological study to better understand the perspectives of internal and external stakeholders. I emailed stakeholders an invitation to participate in the research. I gathered data from multiple sources using a variety of approaches. Specifically, I obtained data about stakeholder perceptions using an anonymous online survey and a confidential interview. I used coding techniques to assist in the data's organization, characterization, and analysis. To ensure the credibility of the research results, I made multiple ethical considerations, including steps to

eliminate bias, confidentiality, anonymity, clarity, respect for participants and the research site, and data misuse. Triangulation, a second coder, and a clear description of the study's setting and procedures were beneficial. Throughout my investigation, I used ethical protocols to guarantee that the rights of all participants were safeguarded and handled with care and respect. Chapter 4 presents the results of the data analysis undertaken for this project.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This explanatory sequential mixed method design with a phenomenological approach study aimed to provide holistic insight by uncovering the combined perceptions of internal and external stakeholders regarding equitable parental engagement to establish a protocol for individualized support.

The study addressed the following research questions:

1. How do the perceptions of internal and external stakeholders' experiences of equitable family engagement in this school differ?
2. What barriers do stakeholders believe are most problematic in building and sustaining equitable family partnerships?
 - a. Internal Stakeholders
 - b. External Stakeholders
3. What solutions do stakeholders see as ways to individualize family engagement?
 - a. Internal Stakeholders
 - b. External Stakeholders

This chapter presents the findings and analysis of the data collected in this research. The chapter begins with an overview of the participants and the characteristics of the sample to provide context for the analysis. This overview includes an outline and review of the data collection procedure. Shortcomings experienced during the data collection process are also discussed. Data were analyzed using a thematic approach where key themes and patterns emerged from the data gathered through a survey with

open-ended questions and interviews with key stakeholders. I carried out this step by highlighting the main themes that emerged from the data. I supported each theme by using direct quotes, excerpts from the interview, and open-ended items on the survey to provide a rich and authentic portrayal of the stakeholders' perspectives. The analysis involved a careful and systematic coding process, allowing for the identification of commonalities, divergences, and nuanced perspectives among the participants.

Participants and Data Collection Process

This research utilized an explanatory sequential mixed method design with a phenomenological approach to examine stakeholder perceptions of parental engagement and equitable family partnerships. A two-phase design was used to collect data for this research. In the first phase, I distributed a survey to internal and external stakeholders selected using purposeful sampling, as discussed in Chapter 3. The data were collected using Qualtrics. The study population of the internal stakeholders included subject teachers, counselors, school social workers, administrators, and district personnel since they were directly involved with students and families.

In contrast, the study population of external stakeholders included parents of students currently enrolled at the site. After permission was granted by the district office personnel and upon IRB approval, I met with the principal to discuss how I would collect the data from the prospective participants. Permission was granted to use the most current email list of internal and external stakeholders. I obtained additional parent emails collected during the open house from teachers and used the informed consent from Gardner-Webb University as a template to create an introductory email to prospective participants.

The first item on the survey was an informed consent that outlined the voluntary nature of the study, the study's purpose, and the benefits of the study. Upon consent, participants could begin the survey; however, the survey ended if the participant opted out and no data were collected. A total of 26 internal and 21 external stakeholders completed the survey. It is important to note that researchers agreed that the number of participants in a survey should be at least 20 to reach saturation (Creswell, 2014; Saunders et al., 2017). Saturation is the criterion for discontinuing data collection/analysis since data after saturation should not reveal new information or findings (Saunders et al., 2017). During this phase of data collection, open-ended and Likert-type items in the survey provided rich data to investigate the perceptions of internal and external stakeholders regarding equitable family engagement and partnership. The survey also consisted of items that required external stakeholders to rank barriers/ challenges that prevented or limited parental engagement. A copy of the survey instrument can be found in Appendix A.

Upon completion of the survey, a new page revealed the last item, which asked participants if they would like to participate in Phase 2 of the research involving an interview. A total of five internal stakeholders and five external stakeholders were interviewed face-to-face and virtually. It is important to note that several researchers contended the number of participants in an interview should be at least five to reach saturation (Creswell, 2014; Saunders et al., 2017). I interviewed all external and two of the internal stakeholders over Google Meet, and the recording was stored via the cloud. I interviewed three internal stakeholders face-to-face and stored the voice recordings on my password-protected device. The interview aimed to identify barriers to equitable

family engagement and identify ways to bridge the gaps. Findings from both sources were analyzed to provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. A copy of the interview protocol can be found in Appendix B.

Systems

Systems were put into place to accurately organize and analyze the volume of data collected from internal and external stakeholders for this analysis. First, participants were required to indicate whether they were internal or external stakeholders. Since one goal of this study was to compare the responses from stakeholders, it was essential to differentiate participant data. Next, after collecting data on Qualtrics, I exported the report to a Google sheet for analysis. During this step, responses to each open-ended item were placed on a different sheet and organized by stakeholder category. After organizing the data accurately, I identified codes, themes, counts, and frequencies. Lastly, I reported on those themes, then repeated the steps for each open-ended question in the survey and each interview item.

I also created a system to analyze the interview data. The recordings were played and transcribed using the dictate feature on Microsoft Word. The dictate feature reduced the time for transcribing drastically. Next, I labeled the data by Internal and External Stakeholder 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, then organized the responses by question for easy analysis.

Alignment of Results to Research Questions

Aligning research data to research questions is of paramount importance in any study. The research questions served as a guiding principle that shaped the entire research process, influencing the selection of appropriate data collection methods, analysis techniques, and interpretation of findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). By aligning data

to research questions, researchers ensure that their investigation remains focused, relevant, and purposeful. The alignment facilitates a clear understanding of the research objectives, enhances the reliability and validity of the study, and ultimately contributes to the generation of meaningful and impactful knowledge (Tracy, 2020). In short, the alignment process allowed for a coherent narrative that directly addressed the purpose of this research.

Findings

This research makes meaning of lived experiences while allowing me to explore the perspectives of internal and external stakeholders, providing rich, detailed, and nuanced insights into the participants' lived experiences regarding equitable family partnerships. The data were collected using open-ended surveys and interviews, which were analyzed using inductive thematic coding and comparisons. During the thematic coding step, codes were derived from the data and compared to identify commonalities and differences among internal and external stakeholders.

The survey contained open-ended items that evoked responses to the personal experiences and perspectives of the participants. I then explored the findings from this research by research question.

Research Question 1: How Do the Perceptions of Internal and External Stakeholders' Experiences of Equitable Family Engagement in This School Differ?

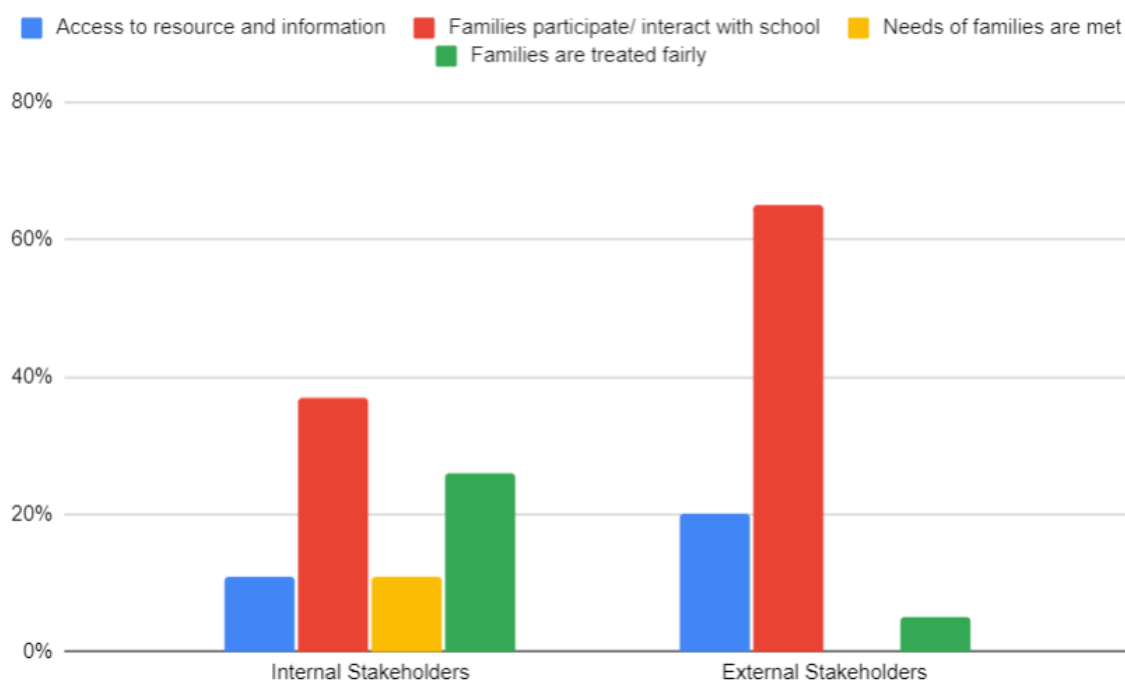
To answer this research question, I explored the survey Section B, Items 1 and 2, and the interview Section B, Questions 1, 2, and 3.

Survey. Section B, Item 1 of the survey, asked participants to define equitable family engagement. For this item, the identified codes were access to resources/information, families' participation/interaction with the school, the needs of families

being met, and families being treated fairly. Figure 5 shows the results for this item, analyzed by group: external and internal stakeholders for comparative analysis.

Figure 5

Stakeholder Response to Survey Item 1: Define Equitable Family Engagement



Note. $N=26$ internal stakeholders, 21 external stakeholders.

The data for internal stakeholders showed that 37% ($n=26$) believed that families participate/interact with the school, and 26% ($n=26$) believed that family engagement means families are treated fairly. Of the remaining 22% ($n=26$) of internal stakeholders, 11% ($n=26$) believed that family engagement means access to resources and information, while 11% ($n=26$) believed that family engagement means the needs of families are met. When external stakeholders were asked the same question, 65% ($n=21$) responded that family engagement means families participate/interact with the school, and 20% ($n=21$) defined family engagement as access to resources and information. In comparison, the

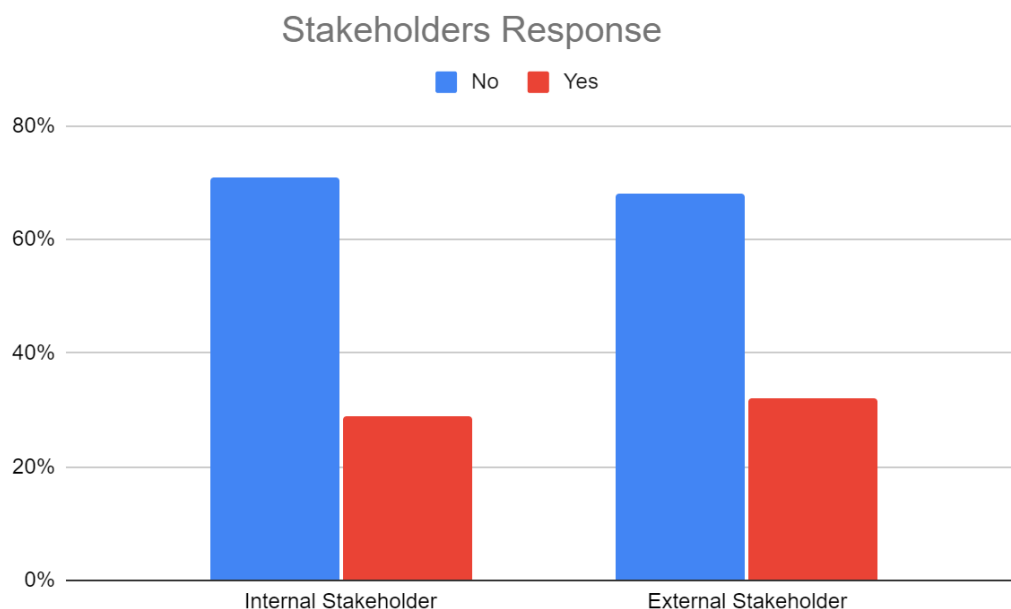
remaining 5% (n=21) believed family engagement means families are treated fairly.

Overall, the perception of family engagement in the school differs between internal and external stakeholders based on their unique roles, experiences, and perspectives. While external stakeholders emphasized the comprehensive involvement of all families and the importance of fair treatment and meaningful interactions, internal stakeholders prioritized equal access, differentiation, flexibility, and fair treatment and inclusion. These varied perspectives provided valuable insight into understanding the experiences of different stakeholders within the community.

Section B, Item 2 of the survey asked participants if they thought that the needs of ALL families were being considered when the family engagement plan was being developed. If yes, how? If no, what needs are not being considered? This item was also one for comparative analysis. Figure 6 shows the results from that item.

Figure 6

Stakeholder Response to Survey Item 2: Are the Needs of ALL Families Being Considered?



Note. N=26 internal stakeholders, 21 external stakeholders.

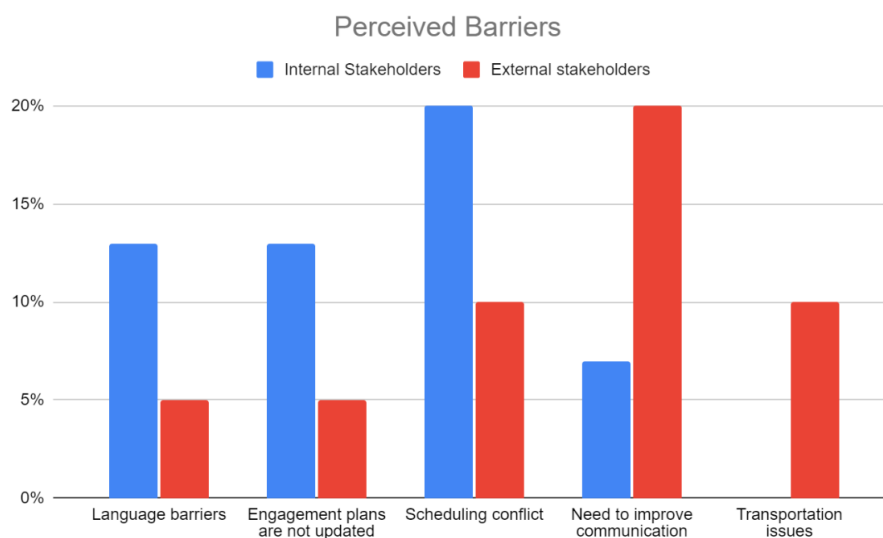
The data revealed that 71% (n=26) of internal stakeholders and 68% (n=21) of external stakeholders believed that the needs of all families were not being met. In comparison, only 29% (n=26) of internal and 32% (n=21) of external stakeholders thought that the needs of all families were being met.

The main theme that arose from participants who believed that the needs of all families were being met was that district initiatives were successful and consistent. All participants who said that the families' needs were being met mentioned the consistency and success of school or district initiatives. Conversely, participants who believed that families' needs were not being met had different opinions. Themes included language barriers, outdated engagement plans, plans not updated to meet the needs of the current

population, scheduling conflicts, the need for improved communication, and transportation issues. Figure 7 shows the data from that item.

Figure 7

Perceived Barriers



Note. $N=26$ internal stakeholders, 21 external stakeholders.

The data indicated that scheduling conflicts and the need to update the engagement plan were the main barriers internal stakeholders saw as a reason why the needs of all families were not being met, while external stakeholders believed that the need to improve communication and scheduling conflicts were the main barriers. Transportation and language barriers were not the participants' main concerns since less than 13% ($n=21$) of both populations noted those issues in their responses.

Interview. In the interview, Section B, Questions 1, 2, and 3 asked participants, “How would you distinguish between family engagement and equitable family engagement? What does equitable family engagement mean to you? How would you describe family engagement practices at this site? Is it present? If yes, what are some

features of the current plan? Is it equitable? If yes, how? If no, what would you change?”

Based on the responses of the internal and external stakeholders, there are varying perspectives on the distinction between family engagement and equitable family engagement. These findings highlight the importance of addressing the inequalities in family engagement and implementing strategies to cater to the diverse needs of the school community. Table 3 shows the codes and themes identified from each data set, along with example quotes from stakeholders.

Table 3*Inductive Coding and Thematic Analysis of Interview Data to Answer Research Question 1*

Theme	Category	Code	Words/phrase	Example quotes by stakeholder
Limited participation	Participation challenges	Barriers to family engagement	The same families are engaged all the time	“The same families are consistently engaged” <i>I-1</i>
	Lack of attendance intervention	Non-participation	Not all families participate	“Not all families participate in school activities” <i>E-2</i>
		Lack of intervention	Use different modes of engagement	“Need for activities to cater to the needs of all families and provide multiple modes of engagement.” <i>I-3</i>
Communication and accessibility	Communication challenges	Reception issues	Phone calls not reaching everyone	“Difficulties in receiving phone calls” <i>E-3</i>
	Accessibility challenges	Invalid contact information	Disconnected numbers	“Not reaching all families” <i>E-1</i>
		Updating contact details	Difficulties in receiving phone calls.	“Updating contact information regularly” <i>E-3</i>
			Need for alternative modes of communication.	Need to update contact information regularly.
Desire for improvement and targeted approach	Flexibility and responsiveness	Organizational improvement	Efforts are in place, but room for improvement	“Adapting family engagement approaches based on the evolving needs of families” <i>I-4</i>
	Personalization and customization	Adaptability and responsiveness	Adapting approaches based on evolving needs	
		Communication enhancement	The desire for more frequent and meaningful communication.	“Frequent and meaningful communication” <i>E-4</i>
		Personalized support	Tailoring approaching to different families’ needs and preferences	

Note. *N*=5 internal stakeholders, 5 external stakeholders.

After analyzing the interview transcript using inductive coding, themes related to equitable family engagement were determined. The first theme was limited participation and engagement. This theme highlighted the perception that family engagement at the school was not equitable due to the limited involvement of certain families. Internal Stakeholder 1 mentioned that “the same families are consistently engaged,” while External Stakeholder 2 expressed that “not all families participate in school activities.” Internal Stakeholder 1 described family engagement as “the participation of families in school activities, while equitable family engagement involves the participation of all families regardless of stakeholders.” Internal Stakeholder 2 emphasized the importance of “multiple modes of engagement, such as virtual communication, to achieve equity.” Internal Stakeholder 3 highlighted the “need for activities to cater to the needs of all families and provide multiple modes of engagement.” External Stakeholder 1 associated family engagement with “participating in school activities and volunteering, while equitable family engagement involves treating all races equally.” External Stakeholder 2 viewed equitable family engagement as ensuring “equal access to resources for all students and promoting respectful communication between teachers and parents.” External Stakeholder 2 emphasized the importance of “teachers reaching out to all families to keep them updated on their child's progress” rather than only focusing on parents of underperforming students. These responses indicated a discrepancy in the level of engagement among different families, suggesting the need for more inclusive and diverse participation.

The second theme was communication and accessibility challenges. Participants expressed concerns about the effectiveness and accessibility of communication methods

used for family engagement. Internal Stakeholders 2 and 3 emphasized the limitations of phone calls and disconnected numbers, highlighting the need for alternative modes of communication. External Stakeholder 3 also mentioned “difficulties in receiving phone calls” and suggested “updating contact information regularly.” Internal Stakeholders 1, 2, and 3 considered the practice inadequate regarding equity. They noted that only a limited number of families were consistently engaged, and efforts such as phone calls home were not reaching all parents.

On the other hand, Internal Stakeholders 4 and 5 acknowledged existing activities and systems. Still, they also highlighted the need for improvement, such as increasing communication and the frequency of parent-teacher interactions. Among the external stakeholders, opinions varied. External Stakeholder 1 felt that family engagement efforts were “not reaching all families.” In contrast, external stakeholders described the practice as ineffective without clearly distinguishing between family engagement and equitable family engagement. External Stakeholders 3, 4, and 5 recognized some positive aspects of the current practice, such as weekly phone calls and teacher communication but also expressed concerns about limited participation and communication gaps. These responses indicated the importance of improving communication strategies to ensure all families can easily access and receive relevant information from the school.

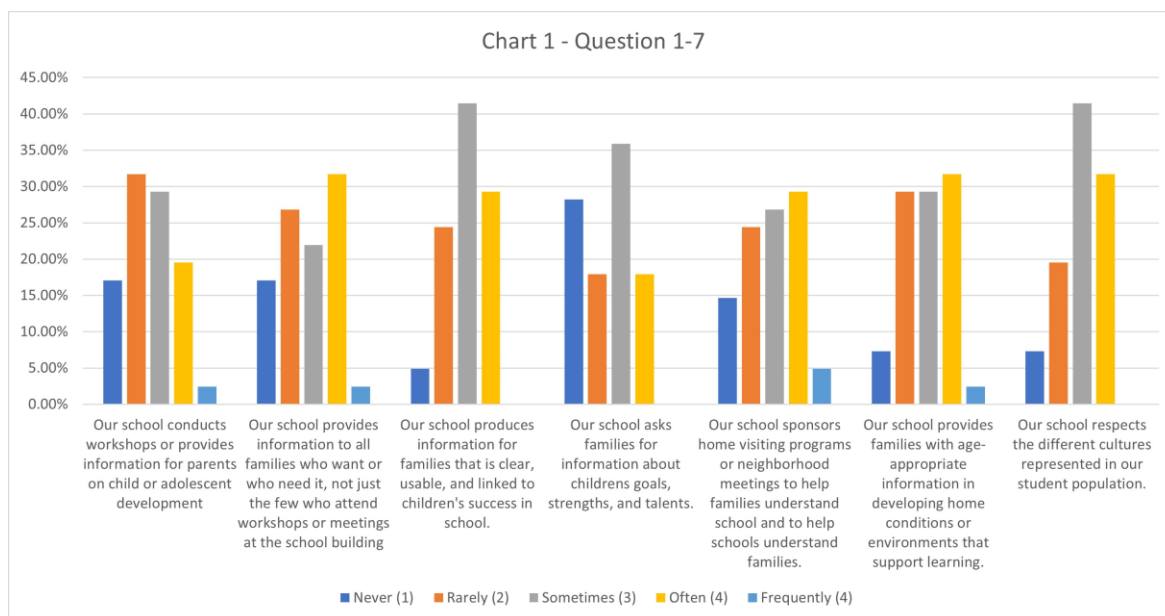
The third theme was the desire for improvement and targeted approaches. Participants acknowledged that there are efforts in place for family engagement but expressed the need for further improvements. Internal Stakeholder 4 mentioned the importance of “adapting family engagement approaches based on the evolving needs of families.” External Stakeholder 4 emphasized the desire for more “frequent and

meaningful communication,” particularly for parents of well-performing students who often feel left out. Internal Stakeholders 1, 2, and 3 pointed out that not all families were being reached or participating in activities, indicating inequities in engagement. External Stakeholder 1 believed that “open house attendance should be mandatory for all parents.” Stakeholders also provided suggestions for improvement, such as implementing multiple modes of communication, updating demographic data regularly, and ensuring teachers contact all parents, including those whose children are performing well. The perceptions of internal and external stakeholders regarding equitable parental engagement in the school varied. While some stakeholders recognize the need for equitable family engagement and suggested improvements, others expressed concerns about the current practice and its limitations in reaching all families.

Research Question 2: What Barriers Do Stakeholders Believe Are Most Problematic in Building and Sustaining Equitable Family Partnerships: (a) Internal Stakeholders and (b) External Stakeholders?

To answer this research question, I compared stakeholder responses from the survey Section C, Items 1-20, and interview Section B, Questions 5, 6, and 7.

Survey. Figure 8 shows a screenshot of the results from the Likert-style Items 1-7 on the survey.

Figure 8*Bar Graph of Results From the Likert-Style Items 1-7*

Note. N=47 stakeholders.

When posed with the statement, “Our school conducts workshops or provides parents with information on child or adolescent development,” the data showed that 17% (n=47) of respondents reported that the school never conducts workshops or provides information, while 31% said it rarely happens, 29% indicated that it sometimes happens, 19% mentioned that it happens often, and only 2% reported that it happens frequently. Next, participants were posed with the statement, “Our school provides information to all families who want or need it, not just a few that attend workshops or meetings in the school building.” In response to this question, 17% of respondents stated that the school never provides information to all families who want or need it, 26.8% reported that it happens rarely, 21% mentioned that it happens sometimes, 31% said it happens often, and only 2.4% indicated that it occurs frequently. For the next statement, “Our school produces information for families that is clear, usable, and linked to children's success in

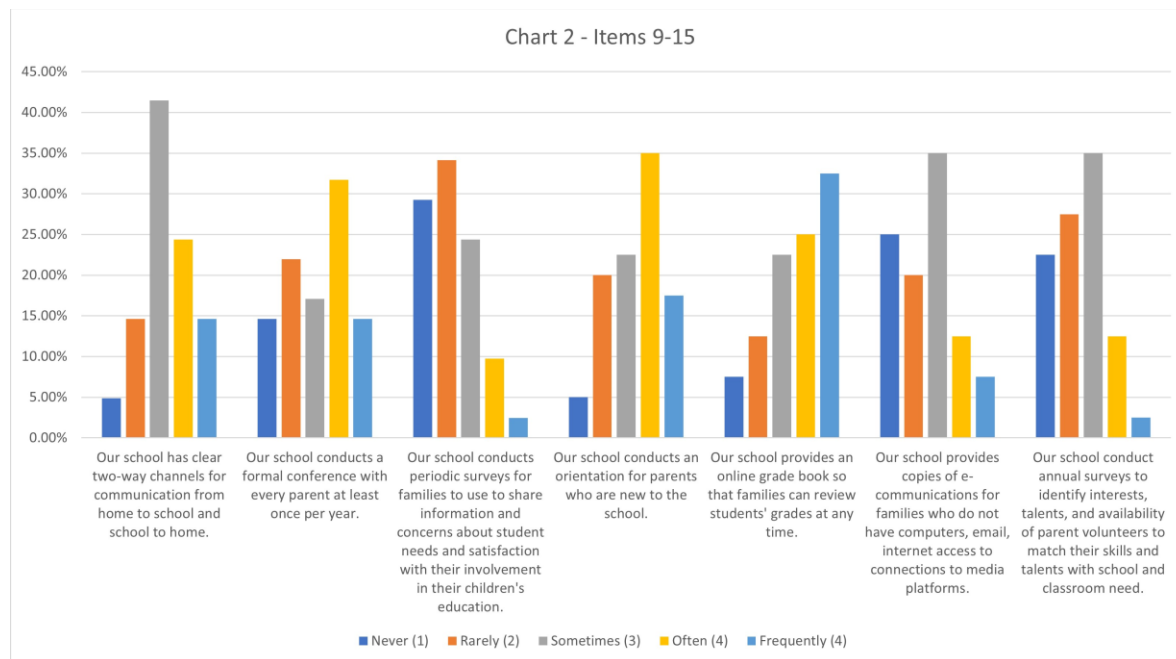
school,” 4.8% of respondents felt that the school never produces clear, usable, and linked information for families. A total of 24% mentioned that it happens rarely, 41% reported that it happens sometimes, and 29% indicated that it happens often. None of the respondents selected the option frequently. For the item, “Our school asks families about children's goals and talents,” the data revealed that 28% of respondents stated that the school never asks families for information about children's goals, strengths, and talents, 17% mentioned that it happens rarely, 35% reported that it happens sometimes, 17% indicated that that happens often, and none of the respondents indicated that it happens frequently.

For the next statement, “Our school sponsors home visit programs or neighborhood meetings to help families understand school and to help the school understand families,” 14.6% of respondents mentioned that the school never sponsors home visit programs or neighborhood meetings, 24% reported that it happens rarely, 26% said it sometimes happens, 29% indicated it happens often, and 4% selected the option frequently. The next statement stated, “Our school provides families with age-appropriate information in developing home conditions or environment”: 10% of respondents felt that the school never provides age-appropriate information to develop the home condition and environment that supports learning, 29% mentioned that it rarely happens, 29% reported that it sometimes happens, 31% indicated that it happens often, and 2% selected the option frequently. When posed with the statement, “Our school respects the different cultures represented in our student population,” 7.3% of respondents felt that the school never respects the different cultures represented in the student population, 19% mentioned that it happens rarely, 4% to 1% reported that it happens sometimes, 31%

indicated that it happens often, and none of the respondents selected that it happens frequently. Figure 9 is a screenshot of the second section of the results, which has Items 9-15.

Figure 9

Bar Graph of Results From the Likert-Style Items 9-15



Note. N=47 stakeholders.

When posed with the statement, “Our school provides communication in the languages of the parents and provides translators and interpreters when needed,” 15% (n=47) of the respondents felt that the school never provides communication in the languages of the parents, 41% mentioned it rarely happens, 30% reported that it sometimes happens, 12% indicated it happens often, and none of the respondents stated that it occurs frequently. For the statement, “Our school has two-way channels for communication from home to school and school to home,” 4% of the respondents felt that the school never has two-way channels for communication, 14% mentioned it

happens rarely, 41% reported that it sometimes happens, 23% indicated it happens often, and 14% selected the option frequently. Next, for “Our school conducts formal conferences with every parent at least once per year,” 14% of the respondents mentioned that the school never conducts a formal conference, 41% reported that it happens rarely, 17% mentioned it happens sometimes, 31% indicated that it happens often, and 14% selected the option frequently.

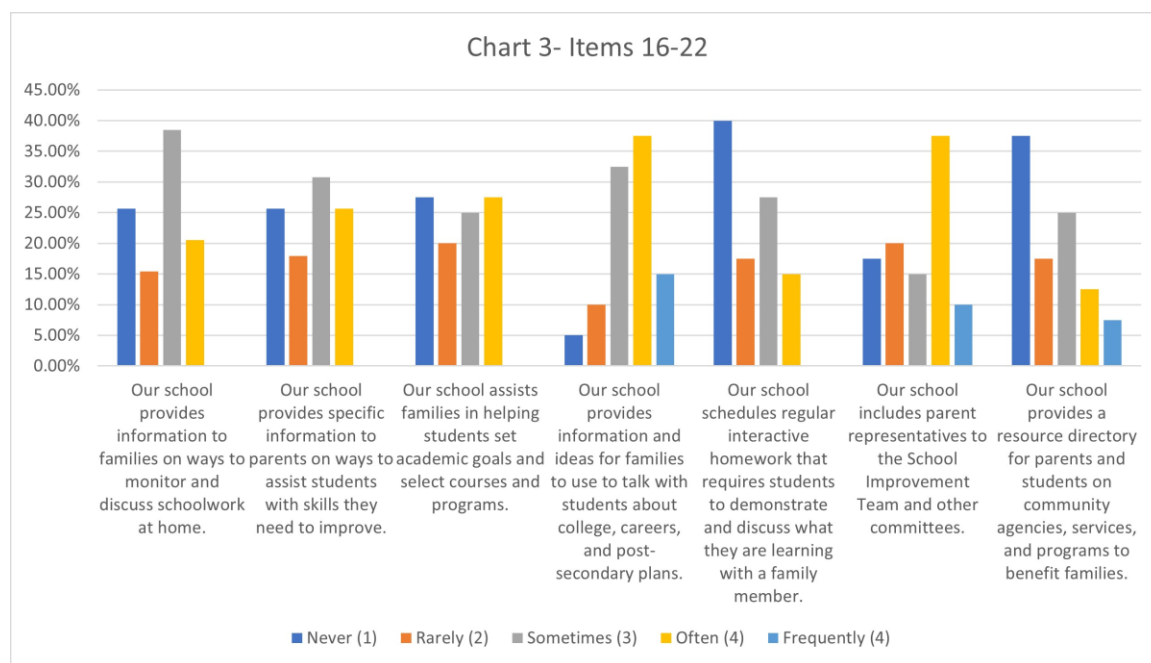
When posed with the statement, “Our school conducts periodic surveys for families to use to share information and concerns about student needs and satisfaction with their involvement in children's education,” 29% of respondents mentioned that the school never conducts periodic surveys, 34% reported that it happens rarely, 24% noted that it happens sometimes, 9% indicated that it happens often, and 2% said that it happens frequently. For the next statement, “Our school conducts an orientation for parents who are new to the school,” the data reveal that 5% of the respondents felt that the school never conducts an orientation for new parents, 20% mentioned that it happens rarely, 22% reported that it sometimes happens, 35% indicated that it happens often, and 17% selected the option frequently. For the next statement, “Our school provides an online grade book so that families can review students' grades at any time,” 7% of respondents felt that the school never provides an online grade book for families, 12% mentioned it happens rarely, 22% reported that it happens sometimes, 25% indicated that it happens often, and 32% selected the option frequently.

For the next statement, “Our school provides copies of e-communication for families who do not have computers, email, or access to connections for media platforms,” 25% of the respondents mentioned that the school never provides copies of e-

communication for families without access, 20% reported it happens rarely, 35% mentioned that it happens sometimes, 12% indicated it happens often, and 7% selected the option frequently. Last, for “Our school conducts an annual survey to identify the interest, talents, and availability of parent volunteers to match their skills and talents with the school and classroom as needed,” 22% of the respondents mentioned that the school never conducts an annual survey for these purposes, 27% reported that it rarely happens, 35% mentioned that it happens sometimes, 12% indicated that it happens often, and 2% selected the option frequently. Figure 10 shows the bar graph of the results for the last remaining items of the Likert scale.

Figure 10

Bar Graph of the Results of the Likert-Style Items 16-22



Note. N=47 stakeholders.

When participants were posed with the statement, “Our school provides information for families on ways to monitor and discuss school work at home,” 25%

(n=47) of respondents felt that the school never provides monitoring information, 15% mentioned it happens rarely, 38% reported that it happens sometimes, and 20% indicated that it happens often. None of the respondents selected the option frequently. For the next statement, “Our school provides specific information to parents on ways to assist students with skills they need to improve,” the data revealed that 25% of respondents felt that the school never provides specific information to parents on assisting students with improving skills, 17% mentioned that it happens rarely, 30% reported that it happens sometimes, and 25% indicated that it happens often. None of the respondents selected the option frequently.

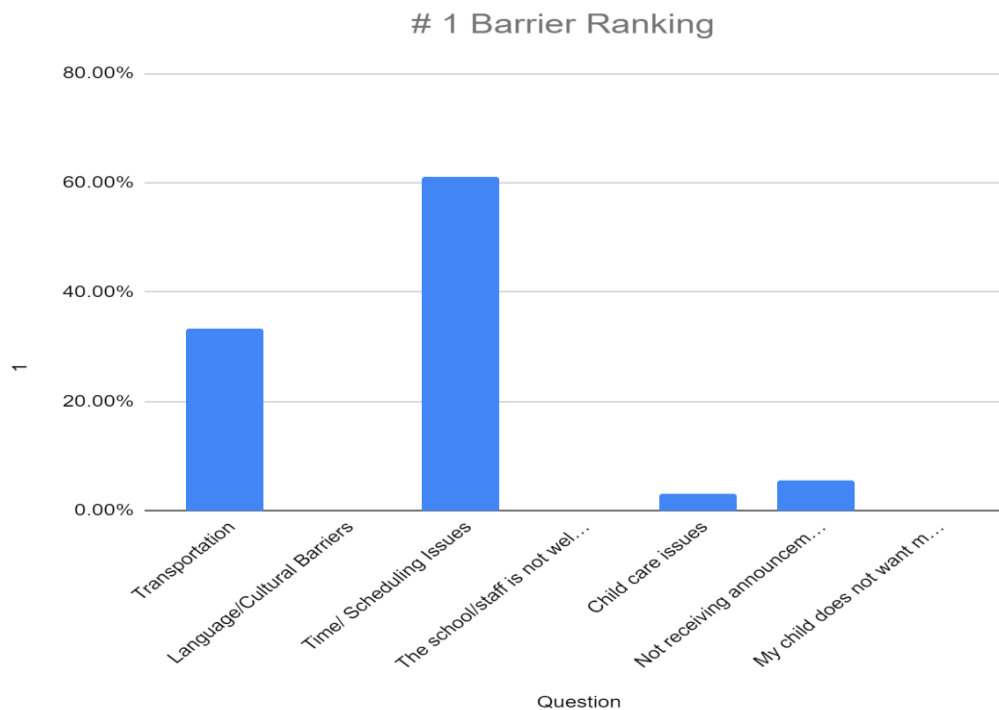
Next, when participants were posed with the statement, “Our school assists families in helping students set academic goals and select courses and programs,” 27% of respondents mentioned that the school never assists families, 20% reported that it rarely happens, 25% mentioned it sometimes happens, and 27% indicated that it happens often. None of the respondents selected the option frequently. For the next statement, “Our school provides information and ideas for families to use to talk to students about college, career, and post-secondary plans,” 5% of the respondents felt that the school never provides this information, 10% mention it rarely happens, 32% reported that it sometimes happens, 37% indicated that it happens often, and 15% indicated that it happens frequently. Next, for “Our school schedules regular interactive homework that requires students to demonstrate and discuss what they are learning with a family member,” the data showed that 40% of respondents believe that the school never schedules regular interactive homework of this nature, 17% reported that it rarely happens, 27% mentioned that it happens sometimes, 15% indicated that it happens often, and no respondent

indicated that it happens frequently. For the next item, “Our school includes a parental representation on the school improvement team and another committee,” 17% of the respondents felt that the school never provides this opportunity, 20% mentioned it rarely happens, 15% reported that it happens sometimes, 37% indicated it happens often, and 10% felt that it happens frequently. And last, when participants were posed with this statement, “Our school provides a resource directory for parents and students on community agencies services and programs to benefit families,” 37% of respondents mentioned that the school never provides a resource directory to parents and students, 17% reported that it rarely happens, 25% mentioned that it happens sometimes, 2% indicated it happens often, and 7% indicated that it happens frequently.

Item 4 of the survey asked external stakeholders (parents and guardians) to rank perceived barriers hindering their participation in school-related and other parental engagement activities. This item was manipulative; participants could drag items and rank them in order of significance. The options were time/scheduling, transportation, language/cultural barriers, the school/staff not being welcoming, childcare issues, not receiving announcements, and their child not wanting them to attend. Figure 11 shows a screenshot of the results from the barrier ranking.

Figure 11

Screenshot of External Stakeholders Barrier Ranking



Note. N=21 external stakeholders.

The data revealed that time/scheduling is the number one barrier to family engagement as perceived by parents and guardians, as 61% (n=21) of participants ranked this item as Number 1, followed by transportation, as 33% (n=21) of participants ranked this barrier as Number 1. The barriers ranked third and fourth are not receiving announcements and childcare issues since these two barriers were the most ranked at Number 2.

Interview. Interview Questions 5, 6, and 7 asked participants to describe challenges/barriers that might be problematic. “What are some challenges/barriers to the current family engagement plan at the site? What could be some specific challenges to

sustaining an equity plan at the site?” During the analysis of the interview data, six themes could be identified. Table 4 shows the codes and themes identified from each data set.

Table 4

Inductive Coding and Thematic Analysis of Interview Data Questions 6 and 7: What Are Some Challenges/Barriers to the Current Family Engagement Plan at the Site; What Could Be Some Specific Challenges to Sustaining an Equity Plan at the Site?

Theme	Category	Code	Words/phrase	Example quotes by stakeholder
Communication challenges	Ineffective communication practices	Lack of feedback	Not receiving feedback from the families	“The main barrier is communication because you might have these things in place, but if you are not receiving feedback from the families, then you won’t know if the plan that you have is working” I-3
		Lack of communication	Communication barriers	“Sometimes we don’t get the phone calls from the school, I think this school does a poor job of updating the phone number log that they have because I have been told that they call, but I do not get the call” E-1
Parental engagement and buy-in	Challenges related to parental attendance	Parental resistance to engagement	Getting parents to buy into the idea	“I think the challenge or barriers that are most problematic is getting parents to buy into the idea” I-3
		Engaging hard-to-reach parents	Getting the parents to come	“Just getting the parents to come to the school” I-5
	Challenges related to parental attitudes and beliefs.			“We do have parents who have never visited the school and have never contacted teachers, so we have to consider those parents and what challenges those parents face and try to overcome their barriers” I-3

(continued)

Theme	Category	Code	Words/phrase	Example quotes by stakeholder
Barriers to attendance	Challenges related to time and availability	Scheduling constraints	Scheduling	“The only barrier I see really is scheduling as sometimes I’m unable to go to the school so, so teachers or leaders can have different options” <i>E-2</i>
		Limited transportation options	Transportation barriers	
	Challenges relating to transportation	Time constraints due to work commitments	Not having the time to attend	“Transportation is a barrier because we only have one vehicle” <i>E-3</i>
Sustainability and leadership approach	Sustainability of family engagement efforts	Incentives for parental engagement	Put some things in place for us where we can implement incentive	“I think we got to get a lot of our stakeholders and those in the central office to probably put some things in place for us, maybe some grants where we can implement incentive for the parents to come in” <i>I-5</i>
		Lack of understanding of family’s needs	School leaders don’t really know what’s going on with families	
	Coordinating family engagement efforts	Ensuring consistency in communication and participation	Consistent modes of communication Consistent ways of participation	“One challenge I could see is that school leaders don’t really know what’s going on with families, so they’re not able to make plans based on the needs of families” <i>E-1</i>
				“For anything to be sustainable, it has to be consistent, so having consistent modes of communication, consistent ways of participation it and maintaining those would be a challenge” <i>E-2</i>

Note. *N*=5 internal stakeholders, 5 external stakeholders.

The first identified theme was communication challenges. Internal and external stakeholders highlighted various communication challenges, such as maintaining up-to-date communication channels, addressing communication gaps, and utilizing diverse methods to reach all families effectively. These challenges indicate the need for adaptable and comprehensive communication strategies to cater to the preferences and circumstances of diverse families. Internal Stakeholder 2 stated that “I think the most challenging piece is the fact that parents are often changing those numbers and I think that's the most challenging thing is having current ways as far as communicating with their parents” can be problematic. Internal Stakeholder 3 noted,

The main barrier is communication because you might have these things in place, but if you are not receiving feedback from the families, then you won't know if your plan is working. So we have to make sure that we have different communication forms to ensure that all families are communicated with.

External Stakeholder 1 mentioned,

One challenge that might be problematic is communication. Sometimes we don't get phone calls from the school. I think this school does a poor job of updating their phone number log because I have been told that they call, but I do not get it.

The second identified theme was parental engagement and buy-in.

Internal Stakeholder 5 and External Stakeholder 4 mentioned parental buy-in and engagement challenges. The internal stakeholders emphasized the importance of getting parents on board and overcoming resistance or disengagement. External Stakeholder 4 noted that her child “does very well at school and I do not see the need to attend open house or parental conference” because she “checks in on grades online and I know that

my child is doing very well.” She noted that maybe if she knew why she needed to attend, she might attend more often. Internal Stakeholder 5 noted that “getting parents to come to school can be challenging.” Usually, parents of A/B students do not frequently attend school activities such as parent conferences.

A third identified theme that was identified was barriers to attendance. External Stakeholders 2, 3, and 5 discussed scheduling conflicts, time constraints, transportation limitations, and perceived lack of necessity as barriers to participation. One parent noted, “I work two jobs and do not have time to attend school-based activities.” She suggested that “offering flexible scheduling options, including alternative activities or timing to accommodate busy parents” may be necessary.

The fourth identified theme was sustainability and leadership approach. External Stakeholder 3 noted that “financial constraints could hinder sustaining equitable family engagement plans.” Participants also emphasized the significance of leadership support in implementing and maintaining those plans. Consistency, long-term strategies, and community partnerships were highlighted as essential for sustaining family engagement initiatives.

Research Question 3: What Solutions Do Stakeholders See as Ways to Individualize Family Engagement: (a) Internal Stakeholders and (b) External Stakeholders?

To answer this research question, I explored and compared the internal and external stakeholder responses from the survey Section B, Items 3 and 4; interview Section B, Question 4, and Section C, Questions 1, and 2.

Survey. The survey Section B, Item 3 asked the participants to list three ways to improve the current engagement plan. For this item, a number of codes were identified.

The codes identified include cater to language barriers, flexible conference times and modes, devise ways to target inactive parents of high-risk students, send surveys to parents, apply multiple engagement strategies, devise ways to track participation, parent accountability, incentives, make open-house or conferences mandatory, provide transportation, have teachers practice home-school engagement efforts, involve the community and social events, and last, apply effective communication strategies. Table 5 organizes this item's data from internal and external stakeholders.

Table 5

Internal and External Stakeholder Responses to Survey Item 4: List Three Ways to Improve the Current Engagement Plan

Codes	Internal stakeholder responses	External stakeholder responses
Apply multiple engagement strategies	39%	25%
Parent accountability	28%	10%
Flexible conference times	22%	25%
Teachers practice home-school engagement activities	22%	5%
Effective communication	22%	40%
Survey parents	17%	10%
Transportation	17%	15%
Devise ways to target inactive parents/parents of high-risk students	11%	5%
Involve the community and social events	11%	25%
Cater to language barriers	6%	5%
Devise ways to track participation	6%	0%
Incentives	6%	5%
Mandatory open house/conference	6%	5%

Note. N=26 internal stakeholders, 21 external stakeholders.

The data revealed some similarities and differences in the perspectives of internal and external stakeholders. Internal and external stakeholders recognize the importance of utilizing various strategies to engage parents; however, internal stakeholders place slightly more emphasis on this code, as 39% (n=26) of internal stakeholders believe that applying multiple engagement strategies is beneficial as opposed to 25% (n=21) of

external stakeholders. Next, 28% (n=26) of internal stakeholders emphasize parent accountability more than 10% (n=21) of external stakeholders. Internal and external stakeholders consider flexible times essential in promoting parent engagement. Their response indicates shared recognition of the need for flexibility to accommodate parents' schedules since 22% (n=26) of internal and 25% (n=21) of external stakeholders believe flexible conference time is beneficial. Twenty-two percent (n=26) of internal stakeholders place more emphasis on the role of teachers in implementing activities that promote home school engagement compared to 5% (n=21) of external stakeholders.

Approximately 40% (n=21) of external stakeholders prioritize effective communication more than 22% (n=26) of internal stakeholders. Internal and external stakeholder responses indicate a similar level of concern regarding the value of surveying parents together regarding feedback, transportation, incentives, mandatory open houses, and catering to language barriers. Internal stakeholders emphasize devising ways to target inactive parents or parents of high-risk students, which is evident in the responses. External stakeholders perceive community involvement as an important factor in fostering parental engagement, as 25% (n=21) of external stakeholders emphasize involving the community and organizing social events more than 11% (n=26) of internal stakeholders. Last, internal stakeholders emphasized developing a mechanism to track parental participation compared to external stakeholders.

By comparing the responses of internal and external stakeholders, it becomes evident that while there are areas of agreement, there are also differences in perspectives. Recognizing these similarities and variations can help develop strategies that effectively engage internal and external stakeholders in promoting parental involvement.

The survey Section B, Item 4 asked the participants, “What could teachers and administrators do to learn more about families to effectively cater to their needs?” The codes identified include surveys, bridge communication barriers, parent night, social activities, home visits, effective communication, and specific details on PowerSchool of students. Table 6 shows the results from that item.

Table 6

Internal and External Stakeholder Responses to Interview Question D-1: What Could Teachers and Administrators Do to Learn More About Families to Effectively Cater to Their Needs?

	Internal stakeholders	External stakeholders
Survey	67%	45%
Bridge communication barriers	6%	0%
Parent night	6%	0%
Social activities	6%	0%
Home visits	13%	0%
Effective communication	19%	80%
Specific details on PowerSchool of students	6%	0%

Note. N=5 internal stakeholders, 5 external stakeholders.

Sixty-seven percent of internal stakeholders highlighted the importance of conducting surveys. Surveys are valuable tools for gathering feedback and insights from stakeholders, allowing them to express their opinions and suggestions. A total of 45% (n=5) of internal stakeholders also recognize the value of surveys. The data suggested that both internal and external stakeholders see surveys as a valuable method of gathering information and obtaining perspectives from parents. Only 6% (n=21) of internal stakeholders suggest organizing parent night social activities and the need for specific details on PowerSchool are strategies to engage parents and create opportunities for

parents and the stakeholders to connect. There was no mention of these themes among external stakeholders. Thirteen percent of internal stakeholders identify home visits as a strategy to engage parents. Home visits involve educators visiting the homes of students and families to establish personal connections and gain a deeper understanding of their needs and circumstances; however, there was no mention of this among external stakeholders. Nineteen percent of internal stakeholders recognize the importance of effective communication, including clear and timely communication between all stakeholders involved in the education process. A total of 80% (n=5) of external stakeholders highlighted the significance of effective communication, indicating a higher emphasis on the need for clear and transparent communication. Based on the table analysis, it is evident that both internal and external stakeholders recognize the value of surveys and effective communication; however, there are differences in the codes mentioned, with internal stakeholders emphasizing home visits, parent night social activities, and specific details on PowerSchool. These findings highlight the importance of considering the perspectives of both internal and external stakeholders when developing engagement strategies and communication plans.

From the codes discussed, two themes can be identified: first, enhancing communication and effective engagement, which involves building bridge communication barriers, surveys, and effective communication; and second, personalized and interactive engagement, which includes home visits and social activities and parent night.

Interview. In the interview, Section B, Item 4 and Section D, Questions 1 and 2 asked participants, “What considerations must be included in family engagement

practices to make them more equitable? What specific need should be catered for in an engagement plan, and how would you cater to those needs if you were responsible for designing the plan?” Table 7 shows the ideas identified from each data set.

Table 7

Strategies Identified by Participants to Answer Research Question 3: What Solutions Do Stakeholders See as Ways to Individualize Family Engagement: (a) Internal Stakeholders and (b) External Stakeholders?

External stakeholder	Internal stakeholder
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey families • Put systems in place to recognize the needs of families • Regular check-ins with families • Virtual parent-teacher conference • Flexible conference hours • Have teachers make phone calls at least once a month to every family of students they teach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys • Flexible conference hours • Identify strategies to engage disengaged families • Engage parents of at-risk students • Consistent engagement strategies • Offer incentives for participation • Identify appropriate times and modes of communication that each family prefer • Input on a Google Drive or Google sheet, which all teachers have access to and can update the information • Hosting social events for families

Note. $N=5$ internal stakeholders, 5 external stakeholders.

First, to answer Research Question 3, “What solutions do stakeholders see as ways individualize family engagement: (a) Internal Stakeholders and (b) External Stakeholders,” there was significant alignment between the strategies identified by external and internal stakeholders, with a focus on surveys, flexibility, regular communication, and personalized approaches; however, internal stakeholders also emphasized strategies specific to improving engagement within the school, such as targeting at-risk students and using shared information platforms. Both groups also recognized the need for strategies to engage families that may not be actively involved,

indicating a shared concern for inclusivity. It is also important to note that internal stakeholders provided various recommendations, including targeting parents who rarely attend open houses, conducting surveys to gather feedback, and engaging disengaged and at-risk parents. They stressed continuous communication and leveraging technology like Google Meet or Zoom, while external stakeholders emphasized identifying parents' preferred communication modes, considering working parents' schedules, and offering virtual engagement options. They stressed communication outside school hours and targeting less-engaged parents while respecting their preferences and accountability for engagement.

Discrepancies and Nonconforming Data

One discrepancy that stood out is the difference in perceptions between internal and external stakeholders regarding equitable family engagement. External stakeholders, such as parents and guardians, emphasized the importance of involvement activities and interactions between the family and the school. They view equitable family partnerships as a comprehensive and inclusive approach. On the other hand, internal stakeholders, including teachers, assistant principals, social workers, and counselors, focus more on equal access to resources, information, and fair treatment. While both groups prioritize equitable family engagement, their interpretations and priorities differ, leading to discrepancies in implementing and understanding this concept within the school.

Another nonconforming aspect is the presence of varied and sometimes incomplete definitions provided by some respondents. Some participants left responses blank. The lack of response may suggest a lack of clarity or understanding of the concepts. The discrepancy in definitions, or lack thereof, highlights the need for further

clarification and consensus among stakeholders.

There were also inconsistencies in responses. There are circumstances where respondents provided conflicting or contradicting statements within their responses. External stakeholders mentioned that equitable family engagement involves all families participating in activities, while others expressed uncertainty or lack of knowledge about the concept. Similarly, internal stakeholders emphasized fair treatment and equal participation, but a few responses were left incomplete or provided limited information. These inconsistencies suggest a potential lack of consensus or understanding among stakeholders, which may require further exploration and clarification.

These discrepancies and nonconforming data highlight the complexity of conducting research and analyzing open-ended responses. They indicate the need for further exploration, clarification, and stakeholder consensus-building to establish a shared understanding of equitable family engagement within the school community.

Evidence of Quality

Ensuring the validity and credibility of this research was of utmost importance. The quality of this research was demonstrated in my study's methodological rigor and coherence, including the rigorous methodological approach, appropriateness of the sampling and participation selection, the meticulousness of the data collection and analysis, trustworthiness, and credibility. Regarding the methodological approach, I ensured this research followed a clear, well-defined design, data collection procedure, and data analysis technique. Next, I employed purposeful sampling and justified inclusion and exclusion criteria in Chapter 3. I obtained rich and relevant experience related to the research phenomenon using purposeful sampling. I also ensured that the

sample size was appropriate for collecting the depth and breadth of participant experiences.

I employed rigorous data collection methods, such as in-depth interviews and open-ended surveys. I clearly outlined the steps for organizing, coding, and identifying themes while ensuring my biases and preconceptions did not influence the interpretation of the data. I performed member checking to validate findings with participants and used multiple data sources.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings of this explanatory sequential mixed method study with a phenomenological approach research that aimed to provide holistic insight by uncovering the combined perceptions of internal and external stakeholders regarding equitable parental engagement to establish a protocol for individualized support. The research questions focused on understanding the differences in stakeholder experiences of equitable family engagement. The study employed analysis of the open-ended survey and interview data. Overall, the findings of this research chapter shed light on the different perspectives and experiences of internal and external stakeholders regarding equitable family engagement. The insights gained from this research contribute to the existing knowledge on equitable family engagement and provide valuable insights for school administrators, educators, and families to improve their collaborative efforts in supporting student success.

In Chapter 5, I discuss and interpret the data, followed by the implications of the results for practice, policy, and theory. I then connect the data to the theoretical framework and provide recommendations for action and future studies.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter provides the discussion and implications of my research findings. This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive overview by deeply exploring the data collected, addressing the research questions, and connecting the findings to the existing body of literature. The chapter also examines how the findings align with or challenge existing theories and conceptual frameworks relating to family engagement. In this chapter, I also discuss the practical implications. I will explore the potential applications of the findings for educational practitioners, policymakers, and stakeholders involved in fostering and promoting equitable family partnerships. Additionally, this chapter discusses future studies, highlighting areas that require further investigation and potential avenues for future research in this field.

This study aimed to provide holistic insight by uncovering the combined perceptions of internal and external stakeholders regarding equitable parental engagement to establish a protocol for individualized support. Using surveys and interviews with internal and external stakeholders, this study addressed the following research questions:

1. How do the perceptions of internal and external stakeholders' experiences of equitable family engagement in this school differ?
2. What barriers do stakeholders believe are most problematic in building and sustaining equitable family partnerships?
 - a. Internal Stakeholders
 - b. External Stakeholders
3. What solutions do stakeholders see as ways to individualize family engagement?

- a. Internal Stakeholders
- b. External Stakeholders

Interpretation of Findings

Interpreting research findings is a crucial component of my study, as it involves making sense of the data and drawing meaningful conclusions to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding. Study results revealed overarching themes within each research question that shed light on parental engagement and equitable family partnerships as perceived by internal and external stakeholders. These themes provide valuable insights into the experiences, perspectives, and challenges parents and families face.

Research Question 1: How Do the Perceptions of Internal and External Stakeholders' Experiences of Equitable Family Engagement in This School Differ?

The ideas emerging from this research question reflected diverse viewpoints held by stakeholders regarding parental engagement and equitable family partnerships. One specific data point that illustrates varying perceptions is the response from external stakeholders who believe that parental involvement primarily involves attending school events and parent-teacher conferences. On the other hand, internal stakeholders expressed a broader understanding of engagement, emphasizing the importance of parents being actively involved in their child's learning at home and participating in decision-making processes that affect their children's education. This discrepancy in perspectives indicates the need for more comprehensive communication and collaboration between school staff and families to align their perceptions and work toward shared goals.

Epstein et al.'s (2019) research on the six types of involvement (parenting,

communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community) provides a relevant framework for understanding these varying perceptions. Epstein et al. argued that stakeholders may prioritize certain types of involvement over others based on their cultural backgrounds, personal experiences, and beliefs; therefore, recognizing and respecting these diverse perspectives can lead to more inclusive and effective family-school partnerships. Darling-Hammond's (2010) research on educational equity also mentioned the idea of varying perceptions. Darling-Hammond emphasized that parental involvement should be a collaborative and reciprocal process where families' cultural assets and knowledge are acknowledged and valued. When stakeholders hold different perceptions about family engagement, it can lead to misconceptions and missed opportunities to tap into the rich resources families bring to the education setting. Stakeholders must engage in open and ongoing dialogue to bridge the gaps in understanding and create a shared vision of equitable family engagement that supports all students' academic and social-emotional growth. It is essential for educators and school leaders to take into account the cultural and individual differences of families, as well as their own biases, to build trust and relationships and foster authentic partnerships. By acknowledging and addressing these diverse perspectives, schools can create a more inclusive and equitable environment where all families feel valued and empowered to actively contribute to their children's education.

Research Question 2: What Barriers Do Stakeholders Believe Are Most Problematic in Building and Sustaining Equitable Family Partnerships: (a) Internal Stakeholders and (b) External Stakeholders?

The overarching theme for this research question was the consideration of all

families' needs. This theme highlights the importance of acknowledging and addressing the diverse needs of families in fostering equitable family engagement. This theme emphasized the significance of schools and educators taking a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to family engagement, ensuring that every family's unique needs and circumstances are considered. The research revealed that a significant portion of internal and external stakeholders believe that the needs of all families are not being considered in the family engagement plan. Internal stakeholders identified scheduling conflicts and the need to update the engagement plans to identify evolving barriers, while external stakeholders highlighted the need for improved communication and scheduling conflicts. In the interview with parents, a recurring theme was the need for schools to recognize and respect families' culturally and socioeconomically diverse needs. Many parents desire inclusive practices that value their backgrounds and experiences, enabling them to actively participate in their child's education. For example, one parent mentioned, "I felt more engaged when the school acknowledged and embraced my family's cultural traditions. It made me feel like they genuinely cared about our family's needs."

The survey responses indicated that some families often face additional barriers and challenges, such as lack of access to resources, limited knowledge, childcare and transportation, and scheduling conflicts. Parents expressed needing more targeted support and resources to overcome these challenges. One respondent also shared that she would appreciate more workshops and materials to understand better how to support her child's learning. This theme aligns with research conducted by Epstein et al. (2019) and Darling-Hammond (2010), two prominent researchers in parental engagement and educational equity. Epstein (2011) emphasized the importance of providing various opportunities for

family engagement that cater to diverse family needs. Epstein et al.'s research aligns with this theme as it underscores the significance of schools offering a range of engagement options that accommodate families' different circumstances, preferences, and abilities. Darling-Hammond emphasized the need for schools to adopt culturally responsive and inclusive practices to create meaningful partnerships with families. Schools must build a collaborative relationship that involves active involvement and shared decision-making where families can feel safe to share their thoughts and feelings.

Research Question 3: What Solutions Do Stakeholders See as Ways to

Individualize Family Engagement: (a) Internal Stakeholders and (b) External Stakeholders?

The first theme for this research question was regular assessment and improvement. Ongoing evaluation and refinement of family engagement strategies are essential to enhance their effectiveness. This theme emphasized the need for schools to regularly assess their existing family engagement plans and make necessary improvements to better meet the needs of diverse families. The research findings highlighted the importance of ongoing assessment and improvement of engagement practices. Internal stakeholders identified inconsistent engagement and limited outreach, while external stakeholders expressed concern about communication gaps and limited participation. Through the interviews with internal and external stakeholders, it was evident that schools recognized the value of assessing and improving their family engagement plans. Educators emphasized the need for continuous feedback and evaluation to ensure their strategies are meeting the desired outcomes. For example, one educator stated, "We need to regularly gather feedback from families through surveys

and meetings to understand their experiences and identify areas where we can improve our engagement efforts.”

The survey responses indicated that families would appreciate it if the school demonstrated a commitment to ongoing assessment and improvement of engagement plans. Many parents expressed the importance of feeling heard and considering their feedback. Epstein et al. (2019) highlighted the significance of continuous evaluation and improvement in family engagement practices. There is a need to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies regularly, involve families in the assessment process, and make necessary adjustments based on feedback (Epstein et al., 2019). This same thought is echoed by Darling-Hammond et al. (2019), who emphasized the importance of regular assessment and improvement.

This research question's second theme was identifying barriers to building and sustaining equitable family partnerships. This theme highlighted the challenges and obstacles that hinder establishing and sustaining equitable relationships between schools and families. The research identified several barriers mentioned by internal and external stakeholders. These included inadequate and ineffective communication, limited participation, outdated engagement efforts, scheduling conflicts, language barriers, and the need for improved cultural responsiveness. During the interview, a recurring theme emerged from internal and external stakeholders alike. The recurring theme was ineffective communication and collaboration between schools and families. Both groups cited challenges initiating and maintaining regular communication channels, such as limited time due to work or other commitments and a lack of clear and consistent communication strategies. For instance, one internal stakeholder stated,

We struggle to establish consistent lines of communication with all families since most of the time we call parents, their numbers are disconnected, or the parent blocks the school number; this makes it difficult to build partnerships with disengaged families.

The survey responses indicated disparities and unequal access to resources. Families expressed concerns about their limited access to technology, transportation difficulties, and financial constraints that hinder their active involvement in school activities. As one survey respondent shared, “I want to participate more, but transportation and having someone looking after my toddler is a big issue for me. It's hard to attend meetings or events when you don't have reliable transportation.” Epstein (2011) emphasized the significance of addressing obstacles that prevent meaningful engagement, such as communication barriers, cultural differences, and socioeconomic disparities. Darling-Hammond et al. (2019) reminded us of the importance of recognizing and addressing systemic barriers that hinder effective collaboration between schools and families. Understanding and addressing these structural and socioeconomic challenges are essential to developing strategies and interventions to promote more equitable and inclusive partnerships between schools and families.

The third theme for this research question was to individualize family engagement. This theme highlights the importance of tailoring family engagement strategies to meet individual families' unique needs and preferences. The theme recognizes that a one-size-fits-all approach to family engagement may not effectively engage all families, and schools need to adopt personalized approaches. Interviews with internal stakeholders revealed their acknowledgment of the importance of individualized

family engagement. Internal stakeholders expressed the need to understand each family's background, socioeconomic status, culture, and other specific needs to create meaningful and personalized engagement opportunities. One internal stakeholder noted that she tries to learn about her students' culture and preferences, but not every teacher does that. She stated it helps her to build stronger relationships and engage families in a way that resonates with them.

Analysis of survey responses indicated that families appreciated schools that took the time to understand their circumstances and provide tailored engagement strategies. Many parents desired more personalized communication and activities aligned with their family's interests and schedule. Epstein (2011) emphasized the importance of recognizing and addressing the diverse needs of families and argued that schools should strive to create plans that consider factors such as language, cultural background, and family circumstances.

These themes have provided valuable insights into the complexities and nuances of effective and equitable family engagement. By examining the data collected from the interviews, surveys, and existing literature, it is evident that addressing the diverse needs of families, overcoming barriers, continuously evaluating and refining engagement plans, and personalizing approaches are crucial to fostering meaningful and equitable family-school partnerships.

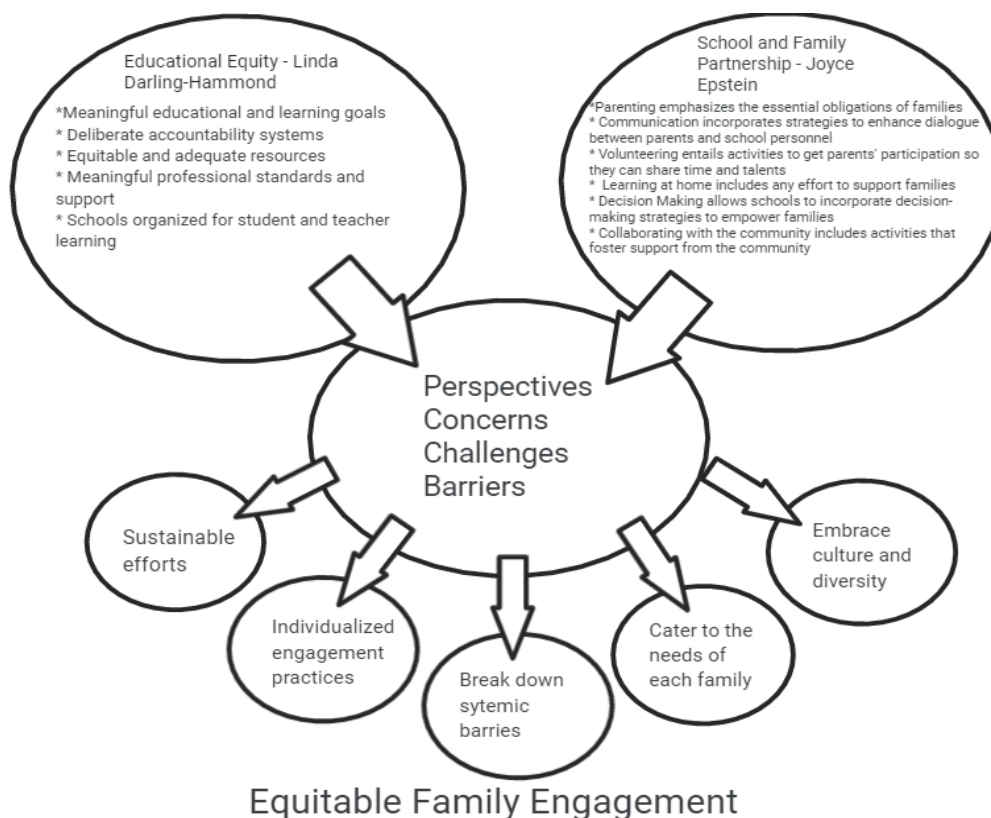
Connections to Theoretical Framework

The work done by Epstein et al. (2019) and Darling-Hammond (2010) laid the theoretical foundation for this study. The overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein et al., 2019) underscore the significance of fostering a strong relationship between family,

school, and community in supporting a child's growth and development. While collaboration across these three domains may not always guarantee success, the approach catalyzes the innate drive of children to achieve success. Meanwhile, the theory of educational equity (Darling-Hammond, 2010) shed light on the historical inequalities within the American education system. Integrating these two theories to create the Thomas-Brown Framework of Equitable Family Engagement paves the way for a comprehensive understanding of the unique factors and barriers that impede family engagement and devise ways for an individualized approach to engagement. Figure 12 is a copy of the illustration of how educational equity theory and overlapping spheres of influence theory were used to create the Thomas-Brown Framework of Equitable Family Engagement.

Figure 12

Combining Darling-Hammond's (2010) Theory of Educational Equity and Epstein et al.'s (2019) Theory of the Overlapping Spheres of Influence to Create the Thomas-Brown Framework of Equitable Family Engagement



Both researchers have made significant contributions to the field of education, particularly in advocating for family involvement and addressing equity issues. Darling-Hammond's (2010) educational equity theory emphasizes the importance of family engagement as a critical component of educational equity. Darling-Hammond argued that providing equitable educational opportunities requires schools to collaborate with families and communities to meet students' diverse needs, advocate for systemic changes beyond equal resource allocation, and address the underlying disparities in the education

system. Some strengths of Darling-Hammond's work include meaningful educational and learning goals, creating deliberate accountability systems, and providing equitable and adequate resources and professional standards. Darling-Hammond's work takes on a comprehensive view of equity, recognizing that it involves more than just resource distribution but also systemic changes in policies, practices, and teacher participation. While Darling-Hammond's ideas are strong in theory, her work sometimes lacks the practical implementation of systemic changes and actionable strategies for practitioners to implement initiatives.

Epstein et al. (2019) identified key areas for family-school partnerships. Epstein et al.'s model provided a practical framework for educators to engage families effectively, including parent-teacher communication, engagement in learning at home, and parent participation in decision-making. Epstein et al.'s model offers practical guidelines and strategies for educators to engage families, making it easier to implement in school settings and helping educators understand the various dimensions of family-school partnerships. While her theory recognizes the critical role of family engagement in improving educational outcomes, some critics argue that Epstein et al.'s model may not address systemic equity issues.

Implications of Results

The implications of the research results are important and far-reaching, impacting various aspects of educational practice, policy, and theory. These implications shed light on key areas that educators, policymakers, and researchers should consider to enhance family-school collaboration and improve student outcomes. This research also holds immense potential for transforming family-school dynamics and fostering equitable

family partnerships. Moreover, these implications can serve as a foundation for continued research and exploration, enriching our understanding of this critical aspect of education.

Implications for Practice

This research has important practical implications for promoting equitable family engagement. The first implication for practice is implementing outreach programs. The research findings highlight the importance of actively implementing outreach programs to engage parents in the educational process. These programs can include initiatives such as home visits, community workshops, and flexible parent-teacher conferences that create opportunities for meaningful interactions between internal and external stakeholders. Investments in expanding extracurricular learning opportunities have been demonstrated to be crucial for children's learning, development, and academic achievement (Wheeler, 2019). Schools can promote a sense of collaboration by proactively reaching out to parents and inviting them to participate, ultimately improving student outcomes.

The next implication is providing parent education and support. This research highlights the significance of providing parent education and support programs that cater to the diverse needs of families. These initiatives can include workshops, training sessions, and resources that equip parents with the knowledge and skills to support their children's academic and socioeconomic development. By offering guidance on effective parenting strategies, navigating the school system, and promoting home learning environments, schools can empower parents to become more actively involved in their children's education (Bazron et al., 2005).

A third implication is fostering inclusive school environments where families feel welcomed, respected, and valued. Schools should strive to create a culture that celebrates

diversity and acknowledges each family's unique strengths and perspectives. Inclusive environments can be achieved through culturally responsive practices, equitable policies, and the promotion of open communication channels that encourage meaningful dialogue (Garrick, 2018). Lastly, leveraging technology for improved communication is another implication for practice. Utilizing digital platforms, such as parent portals, online newsletters, and mobile applications, can enhance the accessibility and timeliness of information sharing. By embracing technology, schools can bridge the communication gap, increase parental engagement, and create a more collaborative partnership.

Implications for Policy

There is a need for policy frameworks that integrate family engagement as an essential component of school accountability measures. Policies can establish clear indicators and benchmarks to assess the quality and effectiveness of school engagement practices. By holding schools accountable for fostering equitable family partnerships, policies can incentivize educational institutions to prioritize equitable family engagement as a fundamental aspect of their operations. Leaders can also put policies in place for professional development and training for educators regarding effective and equitable family partnerships (Szpara, 2017). This training can equip teachers and staff with culturally responsive practices, communication strategies, and an understanding of families' unique needs and challenges. By investing in ongoing professional development, policies can ensure that educators are equipped to build strong and long-lasting partnerships with families that promote student success.

Implications for Theory

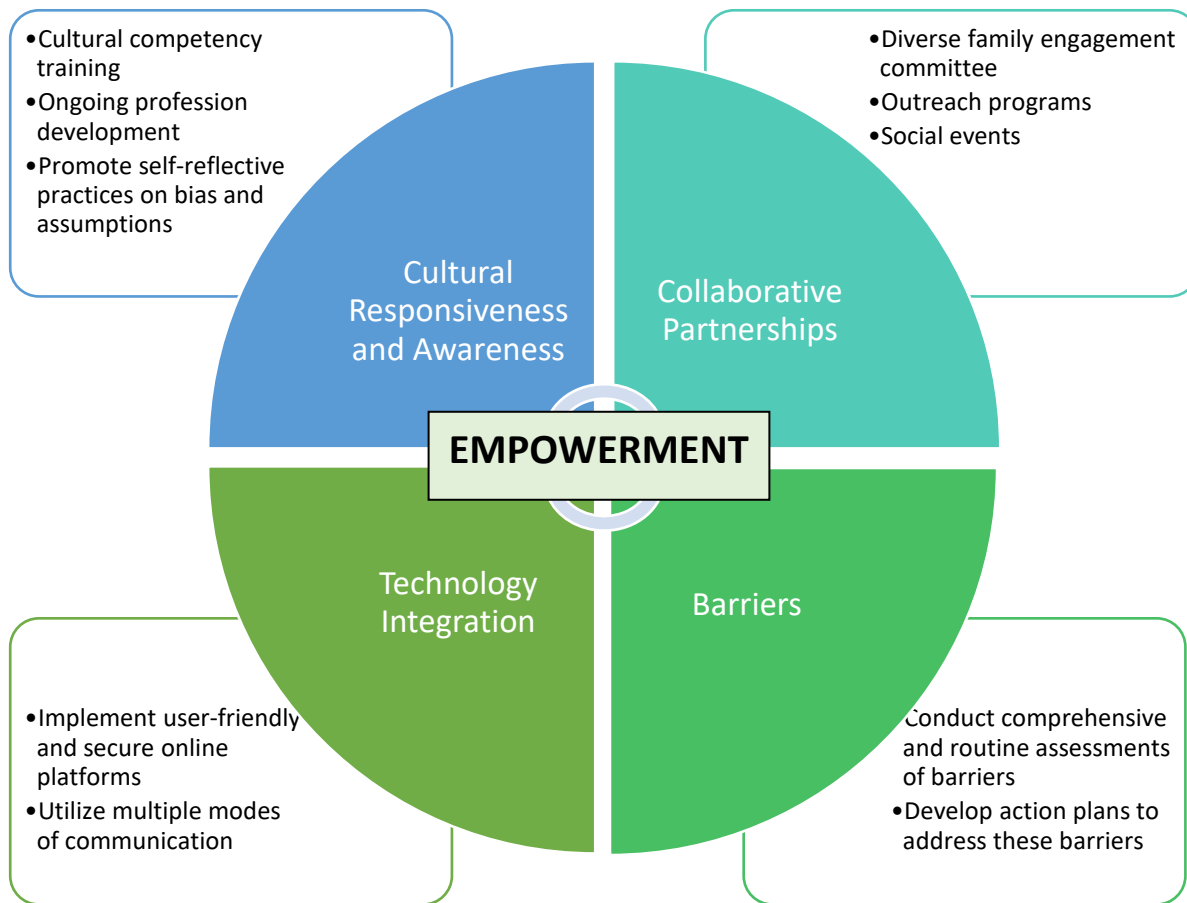
This research has the potential to contribute to the existing theoretical frameworks

of family engagement by assessing the perspectives of internal and external stakeholders to highlight the importance of considering all families' needs, address the barriers to equitable partnerships, promote regular assessment and improvement of engagement plans, and explore ways to individualize family engagement. This research also offers practical insights that can bridge the gap between theory and practice in the field of equitable family engagement. The overarching themes discussed in the interpretation of findings can be useful for researchers to develop theoretical frameworks that are firmly grounded in real-world contexts. This bridge between theory and practice is essential for developing effective strategies, interventions, and policies to promote equitable family partnerships.

Based on the findings from this research, I propose a more comprehensive and in-depth framework that builds on the existing theoretical foundations. These research findings provide valuable insight that contributed to the development of the Thomas-Brown Framework on Equitable Family Partnerships through the analysis of perspectives, concerns, challenges, and barriers. This research highlighted the significance of tailoring engagement strategies to meet each family's unique requirements and needs. The findings emphasized the importance of individualizing family engagement practices to create meaningful and sustained partnerships between schools and families. By identifying the unique challenges and barriers that schools must overcome to foster inclusive family engagement, this new framework focuses on identifying and addressing these barriers systematically while promoting effective strategies to sustain equitable family partnerships over time. This framework also encourages continuous evaluation and refinement of engagement initiatives by exploring

ongoing assessments to foster successful family engagement practices and enhance student outcomes. This framework also delves into the importance of cultural responsiveness in family engagement and devises ways to embrace cultural diversity to strengthen partnership with families. These research findings offer valuable starting points for developing the Thomas-Brown Framework on Equitable Family Engagement that advances our understanding of parental engagement and equitable family partnership in educational settings.

The Thomas-Brown Framework on Equitable Family Engagement integrates the themes identified in the study and considers the varying perceptions of internal and external stakeholders. Figure 13 is an illustration of the Thomas-Brown Framework on Equitable Family Engagement.

Figure 13*Thomas-Brown Framework on Equitable Family Engagement*

This framework aims to provide empowerment in regard to family engagement. By emphasizing equity, inclusivity, and collaboration between families and schools, we can empower families and strengthen the collaborative relationships between home and school. This framework consists of four interconnected components:

1. **Cultural Responsiveness and Awareness:** This component acknowledges families' diverse cultural backgrounds and perspectives, recognizing that engagement strategies should be sensitive to cultural nuances. Drawing from Darling-Hammond's (2010) research on culturally responsive teaching, this

framework highlights understanding and valuing families' cultural practices, beliefs, and languages. Schools must engage in ongoing self-assessment to enhance their cultural competence, fostering an inclusive environment where families feel respected and represented.

Strategies: Implement cultural competency training for educators and school staff, including workshops, seminars, and ongoing professional development specific to the demography of the site. Encourage educators to engage in self-reflection about their cultural biases and assumptions.

2. Collaborative Partnerships: At the core of the Thomas-Brown Framework on Equitable Family Partnership lies the principle of collaboration. Epstein et al.'s (2019) work on overlapping spheres of influence is a foundation for this component. This framework emphasizes meaningful collaboration between families, educators, and community members to co-create engagement plans that address the unique needs of families and students. The framework encourages open and meaningful communication, shared decision-making, and mutually agreed-upon goals to establish strong family-school partnerships.

Strategies: Establish a family engagement committee comprised of parents, teachers, administrators, and community representatives. Hold regular meetings to discuss engagement plans, student progress, and school activities. Conduct outreach programs and social events to build relationships with parents and the community.

3. **Barriers and Empowerment:** This component identifies and addresses the barriers that hinder equitable engagement. By acknowledging the impact of systemic and personal factors, this framework aims to empower families to participate in their children's education actively. The framework draws on the concept of critical family engagement, which calls on dismantling barriers and promoting advocacy for all families, especially those historically marginalized.

Strategies: Conduct comprehensive and routine assessments of barriers to family engagement, using surveys and focus groups with families to identify specific challenges. Develop action plans to address these barriers, such as transportation assistance and hosting family-friendly events.

4. **Technology Integration:** Recognizing the role of technology in modern communication, this framework incorporates leveraging technology for improved family-school communication and engagement. By utilizing various digital platforms and tools to facilitate accessible and timely communication, we can break down geographical and logistic barriers.

Strategies: Implement user-friendly and secure online platforms such as a parent portal or mobile app for easy communication between families and schools. Use technology to share student progress reports, assignments, and school announcements in multiple languages.

Recommendations for Action

1. **Consider the Needs of All Families:** We can achieve this by conducting a

comprehensive needs assessment to identify and address families' barriers and challenges. School districts can utilize strength-based strategies to be culturally responsive and adaptable to the diverse needs of all families.

Institutions can also improve communication channels and provide resources in multiple languages to ensure equitable access.

2. **Regular Assessment and Improvement:** Implement regular assessments, such as biannual surveys and focus groups, to gather feedback from families and stakeholders. Leaders can then use the feedback to identify areas for improvement and implement the necessary changes. Leaders can also designate a team to continuously monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the family engagement practices to ensure they meet all families' evolving needs.
3. **Identify and Address Barriers to Building and Sustaining Equitable Family Partnerships:** Leaders and change agents can address the identified barriers through targeted strategies. We can also improve communication channels by providing information in multiple languages and utilizing various modes of communication. We can also update engagement plans to reflect the current demographics, incorporate family feedback, and offer flexible scheduling options for family engagement activities.
4. **Family Engagement Committee:** This committee can foster open dialogue and collaboration between internal and external stakeholders to develop a common understanding of equitable family engagement through regular meetings, workshops, and professional development sessions. During these sessions, participants can develop a clear definition and framework for equitable family

partnerships encompassing perspectives and strategies that address all families' unique needs and cultural backgrounds.

Recommendations for Future Studies

The findings of this study suggest that there are several avenues for future research on the subject of equitable family engagement. One such investigation to further explore this topic would focus on disengaged parents. Multiple internal stakeholders mentioned engaging disengaged parents can be very challenging. This study could examine disengaged parents' perspectives to identify barriers that hinder participation. Data from this study could be used to determine the most effective strategies to overcome those barriers and provide a deeper understanding of how to engage those families.

Another area of study is to compare stakeholder perceptions and experiences from different school settings with results from this research. This study could shed light on the contextual factors influencing equitable family engagement. Examining schools with diverse demographics, socioeconomic backgrounds, and educational policies could help identify best practices and interventions that effectively promote equity in family partnerships.

Last, another study could be an in-depth case study in schools known for their successful, equitable family engagement practices. This case study could provide valuable insights and serve as a model for other educational institutions. Exploring the specific strategies, policies, and initiatives implemented in these schools and examining the factors that contribute to their success could inform the development of effective interventions in other schools.

Reflection

With all research, striving for transparency and objectivity in the data analysis and interpretation is paramount. In doing so, I had to be self-aware of the potential biases and preconceived ideas, and I took steps to minimize their impact on this research process. To accomplish this, I employed reflexive practice, conducted member checking and informed consent, and made participants comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings. I also had to make myself aware of my personal biases. One possible bias that I made myself aware of was cultural bias. While teaching at a Jamaican high school for 7 years, I observed that despite the financial challenges faced by numerous families, there is active family engagement participation in many schools. With this experience, I had the preexisting assumption that family engagement practices would be even more active in U.S. schools. It was necessary that I did not inadvertently associate higher economic status with a higher level of family participation and focus on the specific and unique challenges all families face. I also ensured I did not overlook systemic factors influencing parental engagement, such as institutional barriers, lack of resources, and external circumstances.

As an employee of the district, it was possible that my role could have impacted some of the responses from the participants. I acknowledged my role might raise ethical considerations regarding informed consent and confidentiality, so I put necessary steps in place to mitigate the potential impacts. I needed to address my role openly and transparently by documenting and discussing potential biases, taking measures to ensure confidentiality, member checking, and using a second coder for independent review and feedback. I also ensured the participants' rights and privacy were protected and informed

consent was obtained freely and without coercion.

The findings from this study shed light on the crucial role of family engagement and the barriers that hinder such engagement. The data collected consistently demonstrated an emphasis on fostering strong family-school partnerships. The research uncovered various barriers to family engagement, including time constraints, lack of knowledge, and limited access to resources. These findings underline the need for a more targeted intervention to overcome these challenges and promote equitable family engagement.

As a result of this study, I now have an increased awareness of the importance of family engagement. The findings emphasize the significant role of families in their children's academic achievement. Understanding this connection has changed my perspective and inspired me to prioritize and actively seek opportunities to engage families more effectively. This research has also led me to think more deeply about recognizing barriers and challenges to family engagement so we can meet the needs of all families. Becoming aware of these challenges has altered my mindset by fostering empathy and understanding of parents who face obstacles and the reasons behind their lack of participation. With this knowledge, I can better explore ways to mitigate these barriers and help leaders create a more inclusive and supportive environment. This study also highlighted the positive outcomes associated with effective family-school relationships. With this new knowledge, my perspective on the significance of cooperation and communication between school and family has changed. I can now better recognize the value of involving parents actively in the decision-making processes and foster a sense of shared responsibility. An executive summary of this research is in

Appendix E.

Conclusion

Effective and equitable family engagement requires a proactive approach. This approach takes into account factors such as cultural and socioeconomic diversity. The findings from this research align with previous research by Epstein et al. (2019), who emphasized the importance of family engagement practices that promote inclusivity, diversity, and equity. Practitioners can utilize the insights from this research to implement outreach programs, provide parent education and support, foster inclusive environments, and leverage technology for improved communication. By incorporating these insights into practice, policy, and theory, stakeholders can work together to strengthen family-school partnerships and enhance the educational experience for all. I hope this research will inspire further exploration, dialogue, and action in the pursuit of equitable family-school partnerships.

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Appendix A

Data Collection Protocol – Survey

Survey Items

A. Demography

1. Role at the site

i. Internal Stakeholder

Teacher
Social Worker
School counselor
Principal

ii. External Stakeholder

Parent/Guardian

2. Number of years associated with the site

iii. 1-5

iv. 6-10

v. 11-15

vi. 15 and more

3. *This question is for external stakeholders only:*

A. How often do you meet with teachers/staff at your child's school (in person/ over the phone)?

1. Almost never
2. Once or twice per year
3. Every few months
4. Monthly
5. Week

B. If you have not been able to join school activities in the past, what are the reasons why? (drag to rank in order of importance)

- a. Transportation
- b. Language or cultural barriers
- c. Time or scheduling issues
- d. The school staff is not welcoming
- e. Child care issues
- f. Not receiving announcements
- g. My child does not want me to attend.

B. Open-ended

1. How would you define equitable family engagement?

2. Do you think that the needs of all families were being considered when the family engagement plan was being developed? If yes, how? If no, why don't you think so?
3. List three ways we can improve the current engagement plan.
4. What data could teachers and administrators use to help them learn more about your child?

C. Use the scoring rubric to rate your school. As you review each item, select a response that comes closest to describing how the activity is implemented at the school.

(I) PARENTING Our School	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Often (4)	Frequently (5)
1. Conducts workshops or provides information for parents on child or adolescent development.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Provides information to all families who want or who need it, not just the few who attend workshops or meetings at the school building.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Produces information for families that is clear, usable, and linked to children's success in school.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Asks families for information about children's goals, strengths, and talents.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Sponsors home visiting programs or neighborhood meetings to help families understand school and to help schools understand families.	1	2	3	4	5

6. Provides families with age-appropriate information in developing home conditions or environments that support learning.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Respects the different cultures represented in our student population.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Provides communications in the language of the parents and provides translators and interpreters when needed.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Has clear two-way channels for communication from home to school and school to home.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Conducts a formal conference with every parent at least once per year.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Conducts periodic surveys for families to use to share information and concerns about student needs and satisfaction with their involvement in their children's education.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Conducts an orientation for parents who are new to the school.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Provides an online grade book so that families can review students' grades at any time.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Provides paper copies of e-communications for families who do not have computers, email, internet access to connections to media platforms.	1	2	3	4	5

15. Conduct annual surveys to identify interests, talents, and availability of parent volunteers to match their skills and talents with school and classroom need.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Provides information to families on ways to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Provides specific information to parents on ways to assist students with skills they need to improve.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Assist families to help students set academic goals and select courses and programs.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Provides information and ideas for families to use to talk with students about college, careers, and post-secondary plans.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Schedule regular interactive homework that requires students to demonstrate and discuss what they are learning with a family member.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Includes parent representatives to the School Improvement Team and other committees.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Provides a resource directory for parents and students on community agencies, services, and programs to benefit families.	1	2	3	4	5

(From Joyce Epstein's Framework)

This is the END of the survey, thank you for your participation.

The next phase of this research includes a 20-minute face-to-face/zoom/phone interview. Your participation will be greatly appreciated.

Confidentiality will be a priority in this interview, and no identifiable information will be used when recording and reporting the findings.

If you would like to participate, please enter your contact information below. If no, feel free to close this page.

Name:

Role at the site:

I. Internal Stakeholder

Teacher

Social Worker

School counselor

Principal

II. External Stakeholder

Parent/Guardian

Contact Information:

Preferable form of interview:

Face-to-face

Zoom

Phonecall

Appendix B

Data Collection Protocol – Interview

Interview Items**A. Icebreaker**

1. Tell me about your most valued skill, talent, or attribute
2. Tell me about your most memorable teacher while you were a student
3. When you were a child, what did you want to become?

B. Perceptions

1. How would you distinguish between family engagement and equitable family engagement?
2. What does equitable family engagement mean to you?
3. How would you describe family engagement practices at this site?
 1. Is it present?
 - a. If yes, what are some features of the current plan?
 2. Is it equitable?
 - a. If yes, how?
 - b. If no, what would you change?
4. What considerations must be included in family engagement practices to make them more equitable?
5. Describe challenges/barriers that might be problematic for each consideration mentioned above
6. What are some challenges/ barriers to the current family engagement plan at the site?
 1. What would you do to fix it?
7. What could be some specific challenges to sustaining an equity plan at the site?

C. Recommendations

1. What specific needs should be catered for in a school's family engagement and equity plan?
 1. How would you cater to these needs if you designed the plan?
2. Any other recommendations?

Appendix C

Participation Email

Dear Participants

I am conducting research titled ‘Parental Engagement or Equitable Family Partnerships: Perspectives from Internal and External Stakeholders.’ This research seeks to provide holistic insight by uncovering internal and external stakeholders' combined perceptions regarding equitable parental engagement to establish a protocol for individualized support. Please take a few minutes to complete the survey. This survey consists of 24 questions and should not take longer than 15 minutes of your time to complete.

The information gathered from this survey will be analyzed and kept confidential, and anonymity will be maintained. You have the right to decline participation in this survey; however, participation would be greatly appreciated as your knowledge and experience as a parent or staff provides valuable information that can benefit the school and efforts to improve family engagement. If you decide to withdraw from participation at any time, there is no penalty or risk of negative consequences.

At the end of the survey, you will be asked if you would like to participate in a 12-question interview with me, the researcher. Again, confidentiality and anonymity are of utmost importance. You do have the option to decline participation with no penalty or risk of negative consequences.

If you have any questions, please contact me at athomas2@scotland.k12.nc.us.

This research is under the supervision of Dr. Sara Newell.

Appendix D

Member Check Email

Member Check

Thank you for investing your time to assist me with such a thought-provoking interview.

I have included a copy of the conversation's text. Please verify the correctness and completeness of the transcript. Please email me at alexinethomas2@gmail.com with any questions or feedback.

Appendix E
Executive Summary

Overview: This research study explored the critical topic of parental engagement and equitable family partnerships. The study aimed to provide holistic insight by uncovering internal and external stakeholders' combined perceptions regarding equitable parental engagement to establish a protocol for individualized support. Effective partnerships between families and schools should be equitable and centered around the individualized needs of the students and their families to provide the necessary support.

The Problem: There has been an increased effort to strengthen the school-family engagement infrastructure. Nevertheless, there is always room for improvement, especially since many of these efforts are often generalized and not individualized.

The Solution:

1. *Consider the needs of all family's needs.*
2. *Regular assessment and improvement.*
3. *Identify and address barriers to building and sustaining equitable family partnerships.*
4. *Family engagement committee.*
5. *Utilize Thomas-Brown Framework on Equitable Family Partnerships*

Highlights: The Thomas-Brown Framework on Equitable Family Partnerships consists of four interconnected components:

1. *Cultural Responsiveness and Awareness*

- a. Strategies: Implement cultural competency training for educators and school staff, including workshops, seminars, and ongoing professional development specific to the demography of the site. Encourage educators to engage in self-reflection about their cultural biases and assumptions.

2. *Collaborative Partnerships*

- a. Strategies: Establish a family engagement committee comprised of parents, teachers, administrators, and community representatives. Hold

regular meetings to discuss engagement plans, student progress, and school activities.

3. *Barriers and Empowerment*

- a. Strategies: Conduct comprehensive and routine assessments of barriers to family engagement, using surveys and focus groups with families to identify specific challenges. Develop action plans to address these barriers, such as transportation assistance and hosting family-friendly events.

4. *Technology Integration*

- a. Strategies: Implement user-friendly and secure online platforms such as a parent portal or mobile app for easy communication between families and schools. Use technology to share student progress reports, assignments, and school announcements in multiple languages.