ABSTRACT

Title: **AN EXAMINATION OF PARENTAL**
               ENGAGEMENT DURING THE
               MIDDLE SCHOOL YEARS

               Sheila M. Jackson, Doctor of Education, 2015

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The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore the previously unexamined

phenomenon of middle school parental engagement in a large urban/suburban/rural

school district of 209 schools in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Across 22

middle schools serving grades six-eight, this study collected and examined perceptions of

the three key adult stakeholder groups – administrators, teachers, and parents – most

actively involved in middle school parental engagement as described within the

theoretical framework of academic socialization. Their reports of observable parental

engagement activities were used to document how district stakeholders operationalize

behaviors that represent the five actionable constructs and three themes of academic

socialization to determine how the district "fares" in employing academic socialization as

a middle school parent engagement strategy. The study also applied quantitative

descriptive analysis through a one-way ANOVA to determine the significance of observable variations in actionable constructs between the perspectives of the three stakeholder groups. Finally, the study illuminated, through regression modeling, when confounding factors/independent variables such as race, income, school size, administrator and teacher experience, parents' educational background, etc., impacted operationalization of academic socialization behaviors for middle school parent and family engagement.

Rejecting the null hypothesis, the study found that the three stakeholder groups had statistically significant differences in perceptions of their implementation of activities aligned to academic socialization. This study ultimately illuminated ways in which these adult stakeholder groups share similar and varied perceptions about their engagement actions that support the achievement and maturation of middle school students. Significantly, this study provided key findings that illuminated areas that can be systemically addressed to transform middle school parent engagement practices through applied academic socialization theory into consistent and effective collaborative efforts between the home and school. The process of operationalizing academic socialization was outlined in terms that any school or district can follow to improve programs and practices of middle school parental engagement to serve in the best interests of students during this period of great transition for both child/adolescent growth and development and adult navigation of systems to provide support for students in this unique stage of growth and maturation.

AN EXAMINATION OF PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT
DURING THE MIDDLE SCHOOL YEARS

by

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I thank my dear friend and mentor, Jan Stocklinski, whom I met 23 ago years as a young parent volunteer, daily seeking to make a difference for my children in their elementary school. Jan saw my passion for parent and family engagement and began to coach and lovingly push me to consciously develop my collaborative problem-solving skills, talents, and knowledge of the Comer School Development Program as a mechanism for meaningful parent engagement and school reform. At the same time, she

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Chapter 1: Introduction

"There is no topic in education in which there is greater agreement than the need for parental involvement," states Joyce Epstein (p. 2006). Since the 1960s, parental involvement or engagement has been positively associated with improved academic outcomes and positive psycho-social development at all levels of schooling (Comer, 1988, 1996, 2005; Dwyer et al., 2001; Epstein & Connors, 1992; Fan & Chen, 2001; Henderson, 1994; Hiatt, 2010; Honig, 1998; Lee & Croninger, 1994; Mapp, 2011 Sanders, 2009; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992; Ho Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). Parental engagement has often been cited as beneficial for schools, teachers, and parents themselves (Comer, 1996, 2005; Epstein & Connors, 1992; Fan & Chen, 2001; Henderson, 1994; Hiatt, 2010; Mapp, 2011; Sanders, 2009; Ho Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996).

However, several studies have shown that while parental engagement in the educational process is important, it is perceived to decline as children move through school and significantly decreases from elementary to middle school (Berla, Henderson, & Kerewsky, 1989; Catsambis & Garland, 1997; Eccles & Harold, 1996; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Epstein, 1995; Gonzales-DeHass & Willems, 2003; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2003; Sanders, 2000; Tunistra & Hiatt-Michael, 2004). Specifically, Epstein and Dauber (1991) found that parental engagement in elementary school was significantly greater than parental engagement in middle schools when defined as volunteering in the classroom, communicating directly with the child's teacher, assisting the child with learning activities at home, and participating in workshops at school.

With this perceived decrease of parental engagement in middle schools, research has highlighted significant deleterious effects. Those effects not only include the decline in middle school students' academic achievement, but also include lower levels of social competence, lower attendance rates, lower degrees of college and career readiness, lower family support either at the school or at home for students and the school programs, and lower levels of school outreach and engagement efforts toward parents (Catsambis & Garland, 1997; Comer, 2005; Gordon et al., 2009; Mapp & Warren, 2011; Patrikakou, 2005; Zill & Nord, 1994).

In contrast, recent studies of middle school parental engagement have proposed that perhaps there is not necessarily a decline, but rather a "shift" in the definition and actualization of middle school parental engagement because of: (a) the size and complexity of both the physical and academic structure of middle schools, (b) the vast number of students that each teacher instructs that makes it difficult for teachers to initiate contact with parents, (c) the multiple teachers to which each student reports that makes it difficult for parents to know who to contact or with whom to form a relationship, and (d) adolescents' push for autonomy from parental in-school visibility and participatory oversight. This shift, based upon adolescent students' different developmental needs and aspirations, requires parents to focus on "academic socialization" (Hill & Tyson, 2009). This theory suggests that perhaps a family's ability to communicate parental academic expectations and foster educational and occupational aspirations becomes the most important and effective educational intervention and support system during the child's middle and high school years, versus those parental engagement behaviors most often documented and actively encouraged by schools in

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students' elementary years (Berla, Henderson, & Kerewsky, 1989; Catsambis & Garland, 1997). Therefore, perhaps what has been perceived as a "decline," can be more aptly described as a shift to greater parental support, less parent/teacher interaction, and more at-home student/parent interaction.

Problem Statement

In the large mid-Atlantic seaboard school district targeted for this study, district administrative staff knows little about parental engagement definitions and behavior in its 22 middle schools serving grade 6-8 students. Much anecdotal data from conversations with educators and parent leaders of middle school PTAs emphasize the perception of "declined or non-existent middle school parental engagement" in comparison to the perceived levels of parental engagement at the elementary school level. A study to determine what middle school parental engagement is, that is, how middle school parental engagement is defined and operationalized, was warranted to help discern whether engagement activities aligned to the most recent and comprehensive theoretical framework for middle school parental engagement - academic socialization theory - exist. This study served as the starting point for developing potential strategic actions that the district and community could undertake to collaboratively capitalize on behaviors that work in the interests of adolescent students' academic growth and psycho-social development at the middle school level toward improved academic achievement.

Justification for the Study

Data. The lack of knowledge about parent engagement in the study district's middle schools, coupled with the aforementioned effects of decreased or changed parental engagement in middle schools elucidated a plausible contributing factor for

district data showing that only 12% of middle schools during school year 2011-2012 met the Maryland state standards for the annual measurable objective for student achievement (The Study District Master Plan, 2012). Data from each of the subsequent three years also showed that 8th grade students performed below the state average in reading and math on the state assessments with less than 80% of the 8th grade students scoring "proficient" in reading and math. Middle school student achievement on the study district's Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) also indicated that one-third of all middle school children continued to read below grade level in 2015. Additionally, the largest decline in student achievement across all indicators for the district occurred between elementary and middle school for the past three years (The Study District Master Plan, 2014).

As research has shown that increased parent and family engagement can improve student academic achievement, identifying and then leveraging middle school parental engagement practices could help transform how the district and community's parental engagement policies and practices at the middle school level are operationalized for improving student achievement. Also, as the study began, we did not know to what extent that schools might have created and implemented their own coordinated systems for family and community engagement, nor to what extent central office leadership played a role in facilitating, supervising and overseeing these school-based efforts to ensure alignment to the overall school system vision and goals as suggested in research (Redding, 2011).

Definition of Terms. Although a Glossary is included in the appendix, it was necessary to initially define the following terms for clarification to better understand key

foci of this study. For purposes of this study, *middle school* will apply to a school serving the sequential grades of six through eight. *Parent* will be defined as a natural parent, a guardian, or an individual acting as a family member of parental status in the absence of a parent or a guardian. *Parent engagement* describes a shared responsibility of families, schools, afterschool programs, and communities to interact and work to improve academic and psycho-social outcomes for all students (Harvard Family Research Project, 2013).

Literature Review

In this section I reviewed the literature related to parent engagement and its importance in the educational process for children. I then selected literature that paid particular attention to why parental engagement is important overall. Next, I discussed the governmental policies related to the overall importance of parental engagement. I then reviewed the literature specifically related to targeted engagement strategies for the parents of elementary school students, followed by a focus on middle school engagement activities and how those strategies show a "shift" from practices traditionally observed at the elementary level. I ended with a description of a particular model of engagement that formed the basis of my study.

Parental Engagement Defined. I first defined *parental engagement,* acknowledging that throughout the last decade, "parent involvement" evolved into *family involvement,* and then into *parent* or *family engagement* and that the terms have been used interchangeably within literature. Whether called parental or family "involvement" or parental or family "engagement," the phenomenon described a shared responsibility of families, schools, afterschool programs, and communities to interact and work to improve

academic and psycho-social outcomes for all students (Harvard Family Research Project, 2013). In 2004, the United States Department of Education (USDE) defined parent engagement as the participation of parents in regular, two-way, meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities (NCLB, 2004). The urgency of parental engagement at all levels of schools was also recently redefined by Arne Duncan, the current Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education (NCLB, 2012) as a partnership in which student achievement and school improvement are seen as a shared responsibility, relationships of trust and respect are established between home and school, and families and school staff see each other as equal partners. Weiss and Lopez (2011) included additional principles beyond the "shared responsibility" in that they spoke to schools being "committed to reaching out to engage families in meaningful ways" and where families "actively [support] their children's learning and development" (p.5). They pointed out how parental engagement continues throughout a child's educational experience and maturity. They also stressed that in order to be effective, parental engagement must occur in multiple settings where children live and learn, such as the home, school, church, and community.

Importance of parental engagement in schools. For 50 years, parental engagement has been a major topic and area of concern for policy makers, educators, and researchers (Booth & Dunn, 1996; Chavkin, 2000; Comer 1968, 1986, 1994, 2008; Epstein 1992, 1995, 2001, 2002; Henderson, 2002, 2010; Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding, Walberg, & Anderson, 2005; Redding, Murphy, & Sheley, 2011; Smrekar, 2001; Weiss, 1998). Studies have shown that parental engagement in the educational process is essential for students' success at all grade levels (Burns, 1993; Comer, 1988,

2005, 2010; Eccles & Harold, 1993; Epstein, 1991, 1995; Henderson, 1994; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Moles, 1995, 1996; Wallace Foundation, 2010). Research also showed that family and community involvement in the education of children is a critical link to improving student achievement and instilling positive attitudes toward learning (Comer, 1968; Fan & Williams, 2010; Henderson, 1994; Hill, 1994). Parental involvement in education has long and often been touted as one of the most meaningful ways to ensure students' academic success and positive psycho-social development with decades of studies citing the important and positive impact of parent, family, and community engagement on improved student achievement outcomes, and upon school improvement efforts (Comer, 1989, 2004; Epstein, 1993; Redding et al., 2011).

Additionally, parental engagement is of interest among other countries. For example, the CEO of the Australian Council for Educational Research, Professor Geoff Masters, echoed the sentiment of researchers in both the U.S. and U.K. when he identified high levels of parent and community involvement as one of the important common features of schools achieving outstanding student outcomes (Masters, 2011). High levels of parental involvement, engagement, and/or partnerships have been shown to benefit students, parents, and schools by promoting positive attitudes toward school for students and families. High levels of parental engagement have also been shown to lead to higher achievement in reading and mathematics; higher quality homework; positive perception of the home-school connection; parental understanding of how schools work; learning of strategies to help children be successful in school; parental confidence in helping their children learn; increased attendance; lower dropout rate; better test scores; fewer discipline problems; higher college attendance rates; positive views of teachers and

the school; higher staff morale; and increased parental and community support for the school (Booth and Dunn, 1996; Comer 1968, 1986, 1988, 1994, 2008, 2010; Eccles & Harold, 1993; Epstein 1992, 2001, 2005; Fan & Williams, 2010; Henderson, 1994, 2002, 2010; Hill & Chou, 2009; Moles, 1995, 1996; Redding, Murphy, & Sheley, 2011; Smrekar, 2001; Weiss, 2011).

Although the importance of family involvement has long been cited in education, its implementation in actual practice has been weaker (Shores, 1998). Despite federal mandates for an increase in family involvement programs in education, development of such programs has not kept pace with the demand (Barton, 2004; Shores, 1998). In addition, some studies have noted that parents acknowledge that they are not as involved as they would like (Berla et al., 1993; Eccles & Harold, 1993; Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding, Walberg, & Anderson, 2005). Researchers (Ferlazzo, 2010; Redding et al., 2011) have cited the "lack of definition" for what school districts, individual schools, or parents identify as effective parent engagement as possible reasons for lack of programs. According to James Comer, problems with parental engagement have stemmed more often from incoherent and inconsistent school and school system practices as opposed to problems originating within the parent community (Comer, 1994). As cited in Decker (2000), Susan Swap posited that it is paradoxical that most schools and districts do not have comprehensive parent involvement programs, given the widespread recognition that parent involvement in schools is important, that it is unequivocally related to improvements in children's achievement, and that improvement in children's achievement is urgently needed. Additionally, Epstein stated, "Everyone wants it, but most do not know how to develop productive relationships" between parents and schools

(Epstein, 2005, p. 701). So, although family involvement has reached a high level of acceptance today as one of the key factors that can help improve the quality of schools and improve student achievement. Susanne Carter admonished that acceptance does not always translate into implementation, commitment or creativity (2002). While these statements were put forth regarding the aggregate of schools, the situation in middle school parental engagement remains an unknown in the study district.

> **Policy background.** Historically significant political support exists for parental engagement in the educational arena. According to Hart in 1988, the stimulus for parental involvement was the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) under President Lyndon B. Johnson. This law specified that parents were expected to assume a more direct role in their children's formal education. The Civil Rights Movement and the War on Poverty provided the political context for passage of ESEA, as this was a period when educational equity or more accurately, inequity, became a national concern. The primary purpose of the original ESEA was to help schools better serve the special educational needs of educationally deprived children. When Congress first passed ESEA, the core of it was Title I, designed to improve achievement among poor and disadvantaged students with a funded mandate to engage parents in the educational process. Over the years Congress has amended and added to the original law in order to raise standards, build in accountability and provide flexibility to schools and districts in the use of federal education dollars so that they can continue to help disadvantaged children.

Additionally, slightly before the passage of the first ESEA, President Johnson initiated the Head Start Program as an important weapon in his declared War on Poverty

in his State of the Union Address in 1964. Authorized under the Head Start Act as

amended in 41 U.S.C.9801 et seq., Project Head Start focused on developing a

comprehensive child development program that would help communities meet the needs

of disadvantaged preschool children. Head Start required that parents serve on school

advisory boards and participate in classroom activities. Housed in the Office of Child

Development in the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (now the

Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) within the Administration for

Children and Families (ACF) office, part of the government's thinking on poverty was

influenced by new research on the effects of poverty and its impact on education by

Robert Cooke, a pediatrician at Johns Hopkins University, and Edward Zigler, a

professor of psychology and director of the Yale University Child Study Center (Baker,

Clark, Kessler-Sklar, Lamb-Parker, Peay, & Piotrkowski, 2001). Their research indicated

an obligation to help disadvantaged groups by compensating for inequality in social or

economic conditions. Head Start was thus designed as a comprehensive program aimed

at improving the quality of education, health, and life for children and families with the

required assistance of the parent. As the purpose of Head Start was to prepare

disadvantaged children for school, the initiative was the driving force behind the

momentum for parental engagement as a strategy for improved student achievement in

subsequent decades (Epstein, 1995). Head Start provided detailed guidelines and

practices that intensified parental engagement within school communities. Epstein

(1995) suggested that because of the creation of Head Start, parental engagement became

very important to schools' missions for improving the quality of education. A great deal

of Head Start's focus was directed at encouraging and teaching schools and communities

effective engagement strategies that moved from simple volunteering and helping at

home to engagement in shared decision-making and leadership at the school site and in

the community. Thus, Head Start was designed to help break the cycle of poverty,

providing preschool children of low-income families with a comprehensive program to

meet their emotional, social, health, nutritional and psychological needs. Another key

purpose of the program established the need for programs to be culturally responsive to

the communities served, and that the communities themselves must invest in its success

through the contribution of volunteer hours and other donations as nonfederal share.

Head Start also provided a model of creating parent-friendly curricula that easily link

home and school activities (Epstein, 1995). Head Start has continued to run concurrently

and complementarily to the ESEA Title I program since 1965.

   With the introduction of Title I, parental involvement became codified and

quickly gained the attention of educators, Congress, parents, and the public. It became

the largest federal program created with the goal in mind to improve children's reading

and math skills by involving parents. Title I law has continuously mandated that

elementary and secondary schools that received federal monies must create parental

involvement programs. It also provided money to districts based upon the number of

low-income children served. Much of the guidance for Title I can be found in the

contents of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and the Elementary and

Secondary Education Act reauthorized by Congress in 2012 (USDOE, 2012). Currently

Title I provides for the largest amount of federal education funding, authorizing the

allocation of about $195 million in grants to the study district's state of Maryland for

Fiscal Year 2015.

Hence, the ESEA has authorized and regulated the majority of federal K-12

education programs since 1965, providing financial support and regulations guiding the

use of those federal education dollars, and with targeted mandates for parental

engagement. Reauthorization of the ESEA occurs every few years. Since 1965, the law

has been reauthorized six times with different names and foci reflecting the agenda of

each sitting President. Over time, ESEA's focus has expanded to include numerous other

objectives , such as setting challenging standards, mandating assessments aligned with

those standards, holding schools accountable for student progress in core subjects,

eliminating achievement gaps, encouraging the use of proven research-based programs,

and ensuring that educators are highly qualified. Expanding to address special education

needs, the Education for All Handicapped Act in 1974 required parents to be an active

partner in determining their child's educational program. Each handicapped student was

to have an individually developed program, called an IEP or Individualized Educational

Plan today.

Currently, most states' achievement standards have accentuated the importance of

parental engagement for improved outcomes for all students and for students' college and

career readiness (Maryland's Plan, 2003). Current requirements that were established by

the study district through the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) are based

upon the state's interpretation of several national iterations of educational doctrine.

President Ronald Reagan was influenced by a spate of national task force reports

such as A Nation at Risk (Gardener, 1983) that expressed the importance of parent

involvement in a child's school life. The federal government began to re-emphasize the

need to connect the child's home life with school expectations. In 1990, President

George H. W. Bush and state governors reauthorized ESEA under the name "America 2000: An Education Strategy." This iteration of the ESEA created nationwide momentum targeted at boosting family and parental involvement in America's public school systems (Decker & Decker, 2003). Later, President Bill Clinton renamed ESEA: America 2000 as ESEA's Goals 2000: Educate America Act (P.L. 103-227) and signed it into existence in 1994. This law included two new goals focused on teacher performance standards and partnerships that would increase parental involvement and support of children's academic achievement and social and emotional development (Decker & Decker, 2001).

Goals 2000 was the first legislative act to specifically mandate increasing family engagement as a goal of the federal government's reform of public schools in America. One of the eight goals of the Goals 2000 legislation stated that by the year 2000, "every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children" (Section 102). Additionally, the law mandated that parents be informed on how they can be involved in school improvement efforts, and be provided with report cards on schools in their district, to help guide their involvement. Schools and education agencies were required to disseminate literature on effective parent involvement, and schools receiving Title I funding were required to have written policies, annual meetings, and training on parental involvement, and re-evaluate and revise their strategies when needed. The platform of Goals 2000 centered on parents' and teachers' shared commitment and expectations for helping children become successful and thus called for more interaction between teacher

and parents. It also called for more training for parents and teachers with an emphasis on effective parental involvement in schools (USDOE, 1994a).

In 2002, President George W. Bush signed the reauthorized ESEA as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 into law (NCLB, 2002). The contents of NCLB highlighted accountability, testing, teacher quality, and student performance. Additionally, it allowed parents the choice of removing their children from low-performing schools if they were not satisfied with the level improvement of the school. James Comer and other researchers in the area of parent and family engagement in education observed that NCLB had a deleterious effect on the country's earlier impetus to strengthen relationships between parents and teachers and moved the country towards a climate of polarization, public school bashing and lower commitment or energy for shared responsibility for educating all children (Comer, 2009).

President Barack Obama revised and replaced NCLB in an update and reauthorization of ESEA entitled The Every Child Succeeds Act (2015). In this stated attempt to reduce over-testing and perceived one-size-fits all mandates for schools across the country, President Obama continued the emphasis that schools are accountable for academic achievement for all students at all levels. He also enhanced the requirements and expanded funding opportunities for parental involvement/engagement as a district and school strategy to improve student achievement outcomes. This reauthorization reinforced parent partnerships as the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including the following explicit assurances:

- that parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning;

- that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school;

- that parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child; and

- that other activities are carried out, such as those described in federal law.

What makes this current iteration and reauthorization of ESEA different from earlier reauthorizations is that it impacts all schools and teachers, not just Title I schools.

Parental engagement in elementary schools. Despite consensus about the importance of families and schools working together to improve student academic achievement and psycho-social development at all ages, 90% of the studies I found concerning parental involvement in education were based on elementary school students and elementary school contexts (Harvard Family Research Project, 2013). Positive effects of parental involvement have been demonstrated at both the elementary and secondary levels across several studies; however, the largest effects most often have occurred in the literature at the elementary level (Jeynes, 2003 and 2007; Stewart, 2008). According to James Comer, (1994) parents of elementary school students and younger children are more visibly engaged in school activities than parents of older students. All students with parents who are involved in their school tend to have fewer behavioral problems and better academic performance, and are more likely to complete high school than students whose parents are not involved in their school (Henderson & Berla, 1994). Elementary school engagement research shows more parents monitoring school and classroom activities, and coordinating their efforts with teachers to encourage acceptable

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classroom behavior and ensure that the child completes schoolwork (Hill & Taylor, 2004). A Child Trends report edited by David Murphy (2013) found that parents are most likely to attend school meetings and events or to volunteer in their child's school when their children are in primary school. The study found the following facts in school year 2012:

–   "More than 90 percent of students in kindergarten through fifth grade had a parent who attended a meeting with their teachers, compared with 87 percent of middle-school students, and 79 percent of ninth- through twelfth-grade students.

–   "In the same year, 89 percent, each, of students in kindergarten through second grade, and students in third through fifth grade, had a parent who attended a scheduled meeting with a teacher, compared with 71 percent of students in middle school and 57 percent of students in high school.

–   "Among students in kindergarten through second grade, 56 percent had parents who volunteered or served on a committee, compared with 51 percent of students in third through fifth grade, 32 percent of students in sixth through eighth grade, and 28 percent of students in ninth through twelfth grade.

–   "Attendance at school or class events, however, peaked with older elementary school students." (p. 4)

James Comer's theories (since 1968) and those of Joyce Epstein (since 1995) have provided typologies of family involvement in education that have become the standard of the field of elementary family engagement and appear in various adaptations including Project Appleseed Six Slices of Parental Involvement National PTA National Standards for Family School Partnerships United States Department of Education School

Improvement Grants like the U.S. Department of Education Project Appleseed (Epstein, 1998). Comer's framework focused on identifying specific engagement behaviors at the school level called school based involvement (such as parent-teacher conferences, volunteering and being present in the classroom, and participation in school governance) and home-based involvement – such as reinforcement of learning at home and in the community (Comer, 1995). With her team from Johns Hopkins University and her work with the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS), Epstein has taught schools how to focus specifically on six particular daily activities around which schools should engage parents and community and quantify activities, namely: Parenting; Communicating; Volunteering; Learning at Home; Decision-Making; and Collaborating with the Community.

       Parental engagement in middle and secondary schools. As the predominant research focus on parent engagement has been on either preschool and kindergarten or elementary school, the potentially supportive role of parent engagement during middle childhood remains understudied. In fact, until the first decade of 2000, the majority of studies on parental engagement did not address the unique changes associated with the middle school experience or adolescent developmental needs. Yet, among middle school students, as it is for all students in preK-12 education, parental engagement is positively associated with improved academic outcomes and positive psycho-social development (Comer, 1988, 2005; Dwyer et al., 2001; Hiatt, 2010; Honig, 1998; Lee & Croninger, 1994; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992; Ho Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996).

       Several studies have shown that while parental engagement in the educational process is important, it is perceived to decline as children move through school and

significantly decreases from elementary to middle school (Berla, Henderson, & Kerewsky, 1989; Catsambis & Garland, 1997; Eccles & Harold, 1996; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Epstein, 1995; Gonzales-DeHass & Willems, 2003; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2003; Sanders, 2000; Tunistra & Hiatt-Michael, 2004). Specifically, Epstein and Dauber (1991) found that parental engagement in elementary school was significantly greater than parental engagement in middle schools when defined as volunteering in the classroom, communicating directly with the child's teacher, assisting the child with learning activities at home and homework, and participating in workshops at school.

This decrease in the level of parental engagement in middle schools is cited as a potential cause of the decline of middle school students' academic achievement, and at the root of issues such as lower levels of social competence, lower attendance rates, lower degrees of college and career readiness, lower family support either at the school or at home for students and the school programs, and lower levels of school outreach and engagement efforts toward parents (Catsambis & Garland, 1997; Comer, 1994; Gordon et al., 2009; Patrikakou, 2005; Zill & Nord, 1994).

Several studies examined factors that may have caused the perceived decline of parental engagement in the middle schools. Researchers stated how the middle school context is different from elementary school context and challenging in a number of ways. First, middle schools are typically larger structures with complex layouts that are difficult for parents to navigate or figure out how to become effectively involved (Dauber & Epstein, 1989; Hill & Chao, 2009; Sanders & Epstein, 2000). That middle school teachers instruct a larger number of students than do their elementary and high school counterparts, it is hard for them to develop and maintain effective and productive

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relationships with the parents of each student, as cited by Hill and Chao (2009). Thirdly, the departmentalization or specialization of individual teachers by content areas results in teachers having fewer contacts with individual students and their families (Dornbusch & Glasgow, 1996; Eccles & Harrold, 1996). A fourth point from research indicates that since there is an increase in the number of teachers with whom a middle school student must interact, it is difficult for parents to even know whom to contact to obtain information about their adolescent child's progress or with whom to form a relationship. Therefore, the middle school structure does not support home-based and school-based engagement strategies in the same way as in elementary school (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Additionally, the complexity and often obsurity of course and curriculum choices that can discourage parent engagement. Many parents feel less capable to to assist with homework or understand which activities or experiences in which to involve their adolecent to increase their knowledge or achievement (Dauber & Epstein, 1993). So, not only does middle school context impact the types of parental engagement that matter, but students' developmental needs impact how parents effectively engage with the school (Hill & Chao, 2009).

In general, the relationship between parents and schools seemed to weaken as children move from elementary school to secondary school (Berla et al., 1989; Eccles & Harold, 1993). However, according to a study by Langdon and Vesper (2000), when elementary and secondary teachers have been asked what one thing they would change in the hopes of improving the public schools, both groups have listed parent engagement as a top priority. Even public opinion rated lack of parent involvement as a main obstacle to

improving public schools (Langdon & Vesper, 2000) and a critical factor influencing school success (Rose, Gallup, & Elam, 1997; Richardson, 2009).

Also, these challenges were compounded as the adolescent begins to seek greater autonomy and self-sufficiency – pushing parents away from the close and visible engagement of elementary years. Many studies of middle school parent engagement used data from the National Education Longitudinal Study or NELS:88 (Ingles, 1988), the Time Use Longitudinal Panel Study (Stevenson & Baker, 1987), and a study of the practices of parents of a large sample of elementary school children in Maryland (Epstein, 1986, 1987). Based on analysis of these data, the authors suggest that schools may be able to make gains in student achievement by giving parents concrete information about parenting styles, teaching methods, and school curricula.

The Office of Educational Research and Improvement (1990) conducted research with results significant to this study. Its data showed that among eighth-graders only 50% of parents had attended a school meeting since the beginning of the school year, 42% had not contacted the school about their child's academic performance, and only 29% had visited their children's classes (White-Clark & Decker, 1996). This study pre-dated the theory of academic socialization, which is discussed below, and thus observed middle school parental engagement activities through the same conceptual lenses of the behaviors lauded in elementary school parental engagement activities.

In another study of secondary schools, 307 high school teachers in the San Francisco Bay area were surveyed to determine how much contact they had with parents. More than half of the teachers reported little contact with parents (Dornbusch & Ritter, 1988). This study also found that teachers rarely initiate contact with parents; in fact,

Dornbusch and Ritter found that 63% of the teachers in their study reported initiating

almost no contact with any of the parents of their students. Teachers in this study

reported that their job as high school teachers was complex and did not emphasize

interactions with parents. Furthermore, teachers reported that when there was contact

with the parents it was either to address discipline problems or to discuss a students'

progress with parents that had demonstrated an interest in their child's education. Thus,

this report found that parents of students beyond elementary ages that are considered to

be average with regards to conduct and academics have very little contact with the

teacher. In addition, teachers in this study reported that they would not prefer an increase

in the contact with such parents and have not had sufficient pre-service or in-service

training to help them do so. The researchers concluded that dramatic changes should not

be expected with regards to parental involvement or parent-teacher contact in secondary

schools because the survey results suggest that schools and school districts are not ready

to embark on the road to massive change in family-school relations (Dornbusch & Ritter,

1988). Importantly, a few studies have noted the importance of appointing a leader in the

school system to coordinate efforts to engage parents and community throughout the

system and grade levels (Auerbach, 2009, 2012; Brown et al., 2007; Dornbusch & Ritter,

1988; Sanders, 2009).

However, most of the studies noted above have tended to view parental

engagement through the same conceptual lens and expectations of elementary schools.

Significantly, Wilder (2014) and a few other researchers found that elementary parent

engagement actions such as homework assistance had a negative effect on middle school

academic achievement. Her findings revealed that the relationship between parent

a=engagement and middle school academic achievement was strongest if parental involvement was defined as parental expectations for academic achievement of their children.

Academic socialization and parental engagement. Significantly, the most recent and comprehensive studies on middle school parental engagement by Harvard Family Research Project's Nancy Hill and Donna Tyson proposed that there is not a decline in middle school parent involvement, but rather a "shift" in the operationalization of middle school parental engagement practices by parents and educators. This shift is based upon adolescent students' different developmental needs and aspirations that require parents to focus less on traditional modes of engagement in the educational lives of their children, and more on the practices they coined as "academic socialization " (Hill & Tyson, 2009). This theory suggested that a family's ability to communicate parental academic expectations and foster educational and occupational aspirations became the most important and effective educational intervention and support system during the child's middle and high school years, versus those parental engagement behaviors most often documented and actively encouraged by schools in students' elementary years, such as homework help, presence in schools, etc. (Berla, Henderson, & Kerewsky, 1989; Catsambis & Garland, 1997).

In particular, Hill and Tyson's meta-analysis of 50 existing studies on parental engagement in middle school allowed them to identify three particular themes with five observable five factors or actions that define types of parental involvement related to achievement (2009). They expanded the definition and developed measurable observable behaviors of academic socialization by reviewing studies published between 1985 and

2006 through an extensive literature search that yielded 127 correlations and 82 beta coefficients to determine the relationship between different types of parent engagement and an array of achievement outcomes at the middle school level. They categorized the studies into three types. They called the first type naturalistic longitudinal and cross-sectional studies. This type consisted of 27 articles and unpublished data sets included correlations between parental involvement actions and achievement, one study that included partial correlations that controlled for demographic or other variables and two studies that were longitudinal in design. The second type of studies was those that reported on the effects of interventions designed to increase parent engagement. Five of those studies were examined. The third type of studies examined were 13 articles that reported on data from the National Education Longitudinal Study 1988 (NELS-88) and similar public access, and nationally representative data sets. Their meta-analysis focused on and coded studies for three specific types of engagement - home-based involvement, school-based involvement, and academic socialization (Hill & Tyson, 2009). They tested the relations of these three types of engagement with achievement using meta-analytic techniques. They found that the average weighted correlation between school-based involvement and achievement was stronger that the average weighted correlation between home-based involvement and achievement, but that academic socialization behaviors emerged with the strongest positive relation with achievement. Most significant for the purposes of this study, Hill and Tyson's meta-analysis allowed them to concretely identify the specific themes and the actionable constructs that explain and define the observable behaviors of the academic socialization framework that I used in this study to align the survey questions.

Academic socialization is how families chose to remain effectively involved in their children's learning during adolescence by communicating parental expectations about education and its value, linking schoolwork to current events, fostering educational and occupational aspirations, discussing learning strategies with children, and making preparations and plans for the future (Hill, 2001). This type of involvement – in which families openly talked about and demonstrated their expectations for their children, promoted opportunities for their children to take independent responsibility for their schoolwork, and developed concrete plans for the child's future – made parents less "visible" daily to schools than standard homework assistance or more traditional school-based parent involvement as seen in elementary schools. Instead, with academic socialization, parents worked at home and in the community directly with their children to build the college-access foundation. Hill and Tyson asserted that a shift in the operationalization of parental engagement toward academic socialization is a move away from traditional homework help, volunteering at school, and attendance at school events toward engagement based upon adolescent students' different developmental needs and aspirations that require parents to focus on key home and real world interactions with their children. Hill and Tyson (2009) also asserted that academic socialization creates a parental engagement strategy that is more dependent on parents' knowledge and resources and a school's ability to provide such information to parents than are other types of engagement.

Through the foci of academic socialization, parents establish and communicate across three themes and five behavioral factors (interchangeably referred to as "behaviors" and/or "actionable constructs"). The themes are: expectations, relevance,

and aspirations. The five behavioral factors embedded within the themes are communicating academic expectations; discussing learning strategies with children; linking school work to current events; fostering educational and occupational aspirations; and making preparations and plans for the future. The themes and factors are further described as follows:

1. Expectations – Parents communicate their vision for their children's futures clearly and enthusiastically. These expectations can be bandied about casually and often. For example, when a college football game is on television, talk about the school, its reputation, and where it is. Factors observed in this thematic area include the following:

   a. Parents communicate academic expectations and promote the value and utility of education.

   b. Parents discuss learning strategies with children.

2. Relevance – Parents play a crucial role in linking academic topics to current events. They raise contemporary subjects with their children and ask about their perspectives. A Factor observed in this thematic area is:

   a. Parents link school work to current life events.

3. Aspirations – Parents encourage their children's high ideals and dreams for the future and find ways to explore their incipient career interests. Factors observed in this thematic area include:

   a. Parents foster educational and occupational aspirations

   b. Parents make preparations and plans for the future

Most significantly for the purposes of this study, Hill and Tyson's meta-analysis allowed them to concretely identify the specific themes and the actionable constructs that explain and define the observable middle school behaviors of the academic socialization framework that I used in this study to align the survey questions. I chose academic socialization as the best framework with which to apply to this examination of how parent engagement was operationalized in the study district's middle schools because of assertions by child and adolescent development theorists and practitioners. They asserted that since the middle school years are such an important time in the educational journey of a child, middle school students need support in *all* areas of their lives at a time when parental engagement is often cited as declining (Catsambis & Garland, 1997; Comer, 1994; Eccles & Harold, 1993; Grolnick et al., 1997; Ouimette, Feldman, & Tung, 2004). As pre-adolescent students grow through many physical, emotional, and intellectual changes while seeking greater autonomy and self-sufficiency, they have much to gain from the exposure to many different adult role models as they try to form their own identities (Comer, 1994; Ouimette, Feldman, & Tung, 2004). Thus, parental engagement at the secondary level was cited as just as important, if not more important, than in the elementary years (Comer, 1994; Dodd et al., 2000; Eccles & Harold, 1996; Gonzales et al., 2002).

Further views on academic socialization came from Epstein and Sanders (2002), who identified middle school academic socialization as a multidimensional construct abstracted as a means by which parents support their children's education and learning for this unique stage of growth and development. Further, other studies found that academic socialization included both school engagement – such as periodically

volunteering in the school and attending conferences, coupled with more home-based

engagement that established expectations, relevance, and aspirations (McWayne,

Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, & Sekino, 2004). Additionally, Sy, Gottfried, and Gottfried

(2002) described academic socialization with the acknowledgement that the educational

materials provided in the home, in addition to the intellectual, cultural climate and

educational aspirations to which the child is exposed by the parent are important in

fostering academic achievement. In broad terms, academic socialization referred to the

actionable constructs/factors that parents employ to influence the development of

attitudes and motives that are critical for school success and effort at the middle school

level (Bempechat, Graham, & Jimenez, 1999).

School and parent understandings of academic socialization also encourage

parental engagement aligned to Eccles and Harold's (1993) and Hoover-Dempsey and

Sandler's (1995, 1997, 1979, 1992) models that are grounded within an ecological

systems framework (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). This framework describes child

development as occurring within embedded systems of influence. Eccles and Harold's

model of parental engagement in education is somewhat broader in scale and includes

beliefs and practices of both parents and teachers, in addition to student outcomes related

to education. Designed with parents of adolescents in mind, the model hinges on the

premise that the beliefs of both the parent and the teacher influence the practices of the

parent and teacher. In turn, the practices of the parent and teacher influence the outcomes

of the child.

Conceptual Framework for the Study. In this study, I applied the construct of

academic socialization, from Hill and Tyson's (2009) theoretical framework, to

questionnaires designed to document the observed engagement behaviors in the study district's middle schools. The five factors - also referred to as "actionable constructs" – that are associated with the three themes of expectations, relevance and aspirations, provided a framework for each questionnaire that investigated parent, administrator and teacher perceptions of how they engage with middle schools students and each other in ways that are developmentally appropriate and supportive for middle school students. Appendix A pictorially explains how I aligned the survey questions used for each stakeholder group: administrators, parents, and teachers to academic socialization. The questionnaire also brought in elements found in the NELs 88 to identify "compounding factors" or independent variables found within demographic data that could influence the perceptions of administrators, teachers and parents regarding academic socialization engagement behaviors.

Analysis of Prior Attempts to Address Problem

In the study district, although there has been no discrete focus on middle school parent engagement, major district policy documents historically stated the school system's vision and goals around parental engagement at all levels and identified the importance of parent involvement to improved student achievement outcomes. In particular, the annually updated *District Bridge to Excellence Master Plan* asserted in one of its seven goals: "Family, school, business, and community relationships will be strengthened to support student achievement" (http://www1.the study district.org/master plan). Additionally, Board of Education (BOE) Policies #0105 (updated in 2011) and #0118 (updated in 2012), and BOE Administrative Procedure #3415 (1997) collectively provided guidance and directions for operationalizing the goal statement. All of these

documents stressed the importance for the district and all individual schools in the study district to develop and implement outreach programs designed to involve parents in the education of their children, in addition to engaging parents in the overall school improvement planning process. However, no formally documented attempts have been made to discern how middle schools have operationalized the policies for parental engagement in the study district, even in light of the acknowledgement that middle school needs and contexts are unique and challenging. Also, though the national and Maryland state achievement standards, have accentuated the importance of parental engagement for improved outcomes for all students and for students' college and career readiness for many years, no formal requirements or directives targeting middle schools have been expressed in those arenas either. However, the aforementioned goal and policy documents indicated the historical impetus for several district-wide practices that were introduced and managed centrally for parent involvement and engagement in all schools over the years.

    Engaging External Partners. A significant systemic practice has been to develop and sustain partnerships with noted family involvement practitioners and researchers, such as James Comer of Yale University (since 1985), and Joyce Epstein of Johns Hopkins University (since 1994), for their programmatic approaches to increasing parental engagement in public education in general. For many years, these nationally recognized models were used to inform and enhance both systemic and school-based structures, policies, and practices to effectively engage parents as partners in the educational process, but only if schools should choose to utilize them (District Master Plan, 2009). The model designers provided hands-on guidance and technical assistance

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to school staff members on how to make their school environments welcoming and inclusive for parents. National staff members from both models also directly worked with parents to encourage and help them use strategies to promote college and career readiness, and to participate in the process of improving schools through shared decision-making (Jackson, 2010).

As far back as 1986, the study district began to use the Comer School Development Program (SDP), or "Comer Process," as the primary research-based foundation of its parent involvement activities (Comer, 2010, the study district Strategic Plan, 1990). James Comer developed the School Development Program (SDP) in 1968, and has since guided its implementation in over 70 school districts in the U.S., and abroad. The study district has maintained an extended partnership with the Yale University Child Study Center due to the fact that since its inception in the study district, the program specifically targeted ways to strategically shift school-community mindsets to help schools and their communities recognize that three levels of parental engagement operated based upon the strengths and talents that parents brought to the school community and that all parents and families should be treated as invaluable partners. As demonstrated in Appendix B, Comer impressed upon the district that 100% of parents and families are engaged at various levels, specifically:

- *Level 3* identified that 60% of the parent community will always be involved in broad-based support such as help with homework, attending meetings and conferences, etc.
- *Level 2* identified that 30% of parents are willing and able to volunteer regularly in school or community-based activities.

- *Level 1* identified that 5% to 10% of parents desire and will participate in shared decision-making and school governance activities.

Of significant historical note, Comer's work began in the study district in 1985-86 in elementary schools designated as "Milliken II" schools as a primary lever for increasing parent, family and community engagement. Identified in the study district Strategic Plan 1985, Milliken II schools were implemented in response to a federal court ruling to desegregate the study district through mandatory busing. "Milliken" refers to a landmark U.S. Supreme Court case in Michigan, which proffered that title to schools deemed too difficult to integrate through traditional means such as busing. Instead of busing, Milliken II schools received additional resources, such the Comer SDP model to increase parent involvement, 1-1 Apple laptop computers for every child, full time guidance counselors, school-based social workers, mandatory summer school programs, focused afterschool and extended day programs, etc., as a means to improve student outcomes (District Strategic Plan, 1990).

The study district was featured in Comer's publications and videos that demonstrated the philosophy that engaging parents and communities is essential to building mutually beneficial relationships that provide academic and psycho-social development support for children (Comer et al., 2006). Working with the study district he promoted that building positive relationships can garner support of public schools as an institution, assist teachers in the classroom as trained instructional volunteers, and provide support and partnership with parents for successful child preparation for college and career readiness (Yale University, 2010). The program expanded to middle and high schools. However, unfortunately, the study district never conducted a formal

investigation of the implementation of the Comer model or its particular impact upon parental engagement at any school level beyond improvements shown in school climate surveys conducted from 1988-2004 in "Comer schools." Again, no empirical study was conducted to quantify or describe parental engagement in the district's middle schools.

In the mid-1990s the study district also formed an informal partnership with a neighboring university that likewise promoted a strategic parental engagement program. Engaging Joyce Epstein of Johns Hopkins University and her work with the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS), led to a segment of district schools independently choosing to utilize NNPS strategies to focus specifically on six particular activities around which schools could engage parents and community, namely:

1. *Parenting.* The basic obligations of parents include housing, health, nutrition, and safety for their children. Parents also should provide home conditions for learning at all levels.

2. *Communicating.* The basic obligations of schools include school-to-home communication such as memos, notices, newsletters, report cards, conferences, and phone calls plus information on the school, courses, programs, and activities.

3. *Volunteering.* Parents volunteer their time and talents at school activities and fundraising.

4. *Learning at Home.* Parents help their children with homework and with setting educational goals.

5. *Decision-Making.* Parents participate in PTA/PTO organizations and school decisions on policy, leadership, and advocacy.

6. *Collaborating with the Community*. Parents encourage partnerships with community resources and services (Epstein, 1995).

Because the district's central offices that focused on strengthening parent and community engagement noted the confluence of Comer SDP and Epstein, they began to merge the two initiatives in order to bring coherence for engagement practice to be utilized in all schools as explained in Appendix C. This effort was undertaken in the interests of succinctly unifying two major parental engagement concepts in order to provide discrete actionable constructs that could concretize both a systemic and school-based approach to improved involvement and engagement of parents, families, and communities as partners in the educational process toward its goals to:

- Increase student achievement for college and career-readiness

- Promote positive psycho-social development of children

- Build public support for schools

- Improve teacher efficacy in the classroom

- Improve administrator efficacy as a community instructional leader

Although the study district has never pointedly focused on examining middle school parental engagement, it promoted a combination of Comer's and Epstein's parental engagement frameworks as a general practice for all schools (Jackson, 2004). These combined approaches were utilized as major theoretical components of a variety of parent partnership and engagement programs documented in district annual reports. Again, however, no formal studies of the extent or impact of implementation of either program have ever been conducted aside from anecdotal reflections based upon schools' implementation of bi-annual school climate surveys. Additionally, we do not know the

full extent to which any of these programs were implemented across the study district's middle schools.

Locally designed approaches. The study district developed other protocols and practices for engaging parents, including the development of BOE Administrative Procedure (AP) 3415 (The Study District Strategic Plan, 1993). This AP laid out specific guidelines for engaging parents in shared decision-making practices arising out of the systemic adoption of the Comer SDP School Planning and Management Team (SPMT)/School Improvement Team (SIT) construct. This AP also informed later implementation of collaborative processes for parental engagement such as School-Based Budgeting (SBB), and the current process Student-Based Budgeting (SBB) (The Study District Master Plan, 2012). These processes continue to provide an opportunity for schools to move beyond involving parents in more traditional ways and require that all schools elevate parents to the shared governance level.

Another effort to institutionalize processes for seeking increased parental engagement began in 1994, with the bi-annual administration of the "School Climate Survey" (The Study District Strategic Plan, 1994). This psychometrically sound document is still utilized today and administered by the school system's Office of Research and Evaluation. It was developed in collaboration with Yale University Comer SDP in an effort to develop "quality indicators" that measure how efficacious school communities were in engaging all stakeholders (The Study District School Climate Survey, 2012). Anecdotal reports indicate that the climate survey reveals great variances across school communities in public and systemic perceptions about both the effectiveness of the variety of parental engagement strategies currently employed in

schools, and how efficacious each school is in its approach to involving and engaging

parents overall (The Study District Annual Report, 2012). In addition to processes and

tools used by the system for parental engagement and partnerships, the school system has

periodically created and employed various departments and offices charged with

providing guidance, training, and/or leading parental involvement and engagement

strategies for the district. For instance, from 1990-1996, the structure that served to help

schools address parent involvement was the Office of Human Relations (The Study

District Strategic Plan, 1996). It deployed varying numbers of instructional specialists to

provide information and resources to over 180 schools about the importance of parent

involvement. Later, from 1998-2010, instructional and administrative staff trained to

implement Comer SDP were embedded in various Departments – whose names and foci

often changed as superintendents changed (seven changes from 1998-2010). Those

specialists carried, as one of their responsibilities, the charge for systemically guiding

processes and providing professional development for effective parental involvement and

engagement to teachers, principals, support staff, central office staff and to parent

community groups (Jackson, 2011).

Until its final dissolution in 2010, a Department of School Development/Family

and Community Outreach, was charged not only with the development of updated

policies and administrative procedures, but also with the development of monthly training

sessions for principals, teachers, and staff in need of support to engage parents more

effectively (Jackson, 2010). The department developed and implemented comprehensive

training modules for all stakeholder groups, including principals, teachers, central office

staff, and parents. During this time, the department also developed and implemented two

MSDE-lauded and recognized programs for parental engagement for the study district (The Study District Master Plan, 2008). The first program was the Parents Assisting Teachers (PAT) Volunteer Training Program in which parent volunteers were professionally developed and fingerprinted, at school system expense, to serve as aides and assistants in classrooms working directly with students in support of classroom goals (The Study District Master Plan, 2006). The second initiative involved hiring and training Parent Liaisons for every school (The Study District Master Plan, 2006). The 2009-2010 school years, with massive systemic reorganization, budget cuts, and staff realignments saw the demise of all of these programs, again with no empirical study of implementation or impact in middle schools.

Although the study district dissolved its formal department dedicated to parent engagement in 2010, executive leaders periodically created other structured committees to engage parents, as directed by systemic documents and structures created by the BOE, various superintendents, MSDE, and court orders. One significant structure, the Community Advisory Board, also known as the "Committee of 100," was created in 1987 as a stakeholder advisory panel to oversee the school system's implementation of its court ordered desegregation plan, and to provide an "equity lens" to the establishment of Magnet and Milliken II schools across the county (The Study District Strategic Plan, 1990). The original members were delegated by MSDE and the court system, but selected by superintendents, with recommendations from state and county government officials. The panel included highly skilled and diverse participants from the community. The advisory panel was chaired by Brit Kirwan, former President of the University of Maryland, and included the presidents of Bowie State University and Prince George's

Community College, in addition to parents, teachers, principals, central office staff, elected officials, and community organization leaders. As the district was released from the desegregation case court order in 2006, the superintendent at that time stated that the system no longer had the compulsion to, nor saw the benefit of convening or engaging parents and community members at that level and thus disbanded the Parent Community Advisory Board (BOE Minutes, January 2007). The next immediate superintendent completely de-funded and disbanded the Department of Family and Community Outreach with the statement: "… the work of improvement and parental engagement is the work of the individual school, not a central office…" (The Study District Strategic Plan, 2010). Thus, the decisions of two superintendents over the course of five years appeared to reverse the system's perceived commitment to engaging parents at all levels of involvement beyond supporting their children at home, volunteering, and attending parent and teacher conferences (*Washington Post*, 2010).

Other Parent Advisory Boards were periodically established in alignment with specific tasks or ad hoc projects of various central offices of the school system, such as short-lived committees to study and make recommendations around specific initiatives such as principal selection, School Boundary Changes, the Student Code of Conduct, High School Grading Policies, and/or the naming or renaming of a school. Also working closely with schools to reinforce effective parental engagement strategies is a currently reinvigorated and restructured County Council of PTA's (2010). Their mission is to ensure that every school develops and sustains a formal parent organization that involves parents in a wide variety of ways (The Study District Council of PTA, 2011). This initiative, along with previously mentioned school system practices, has long been

supported in literature surrounding the promotion of effective parent involvement and engagement, though no study of middle school implementation or engagement has been documented.

This brief examination of documents, structures, and records of historical practices interestingly highlighted that the study district embraced the research that calls for school systems to articulate a clear vision for family and community engagement in order for schools to feel supported to develop and implement engagement practices (Westmoreland & Krieger, 2011). However, the study district's inconsistency of maintaining or sustaining any structured, coherent, and clearly articulated program or protocol for parent and community engagement for all schools has inhibited the ability to analyze engagement practices at any level and particularly at the middle school level. This study provided an opportunity to examine if this purported decline was more likely evidence of the "shift" in engagement behaviors described in research on academic socialization. Also, since parents' perspectives have rarely been sought in much of the research on parent engagement in middle schools, this study yielded important previously unexplored concurrent correlational findings on engagement supporting the academic growth and development of adolescents (Bernhard & Freire, 1999; Dyson, 2001; Li, 2003; Ramirez, 2003).

A quantitative study design was proposed to seek and clarify the actions – or actionable constructs – that define of the occurrence of parental engagement activities in 22 of the study district's grade 6-8 middle schools as aligned to the conceptual framework of academic socialization. The quantitative design was chosen to allow for quantifying observable parental engagement activities or actionable constructs from

academic socialization research that define parental engagement at the middle school

level as carried out by parents, teachers, and administrators. In the next section I describe

the design of my study, state my hypothesis and research questions and detail methods

used to address the questions and obtaining requisite permissions from the University

Institutional Review Board (IRB), study district IRB, and from the study district's school

leaders targeted for the study.

Chapter 2: Investigation

In this section I will address details of my study, which first hinged upon developing research questions. A hypothesis and null hypothesis were developed in order to make predictions about the observable events in the study.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The following research questions guided my study of the perceptions of middle school parents, teachers, administrators, and students toward appropriate middle school parental engagement:

1. From the perspectives of three groups of adult stakeholders (who represent the school district in each school) – middle school administrators, teachers and parents – how does the district "fare" in operationalizing Hill and Tyson's (2009) parental engagement actionable constructs for academic socialization?

2. Do district middle schools operationalize Hill and Tyson's theory of academic socialization differently?

3. How do demographic (e.g., race, income, educational level, etc.) factors correlate with which stakeholders engage in the actionable constructs of the theory of academic socialization?

My hypothesis was that the average responses of reported frequencies of actionable constructs for academic socialization by parents, teachers, and administrators across the 22 grade 6-8 middle schools will show statistically significant differences based upon the different role perspectives through which they purportedly view and implement actions of middle school parent engagement. My null hypothesis was that the

reported frequencies will not show statistically significant differences across the average responses of the reported frequencies of actionable constructs for academic socialization, as all adult stakeholders for middle school student matriculation share similar views and implement similar actions of middle school parent engagement based upon understanding of middle school student needs.

Study Design

This study utilized a quantitative method involving the anonymous electronic administration of surveys to answer the research questions. The choice of this design was based upon Creswell's (2011) explanation that quantitative studies are based on postpositivist claims for developing knowledge, use experiments and surveys, and collect data on predetermined instruments that yield statistical data. Thus, the researcher sought to utilize a quantitative process to help to gather factual information that could be reliably analyzed statistically in order to objectively generalize results across the district without value-laden assumptions. The quantitative design also afforded the researcher the opportunity to collect information from a sample of respondents from a well-defined population (Czaja & Blair, 2005). Finally, the quantitative design allowed for the use of an online survey allowed the researcher to collect a significant amount of data in a relatively short period of time.

Babbie (2001) described the following advantages of the use of the survey method around which this study was designed:

1. One can collect a large amount of data in a fairly short time;

2. Surveys are easier and less expensive than other forms of data collection;

3. Questionnaires can be used to research almost any aspect of human perceptions regarding the variables under study; and

4. They can be easily used in field settings.

To this end, I selected the survey-questionnaire as the most viable and reliable tool for this study.

   Variables – Independent/Dependent. Based on an exhaustive review of the literature, the survey questions proffered to all three groups across the five factors and three themes of academic socialization served as the dependent variables of this study. Distinguishing demographic characteristics served as independent variables or the confounding factors and control variables for data analysis through linear regression. These included gender, age, highest education level attained, years of experience of teachers and administrators, number of school aged children in the household, approximate annual income of parents, and number of students taught by teachers and with whom administrators interact daily.

Methods/Procedures

   Participants. The participants for this study were drawn from 22 schools that serve the grades 6-8 middle school population of students as identified in Appendix H. After I received approval from the UMD Institutional Review Board (IRB) and from the district's Research and Evaluation office, I recruited participating parents, teachers, and administrators. I targeted eighth grade parents/families whose children matriculated in the study district for the prior year of middle school, because those families would have had at least one full year of experience within the targeted middle school cultures to observe employed middle school practices in addition to being able to reflect upon their

own practices as middle school parents. I contacted the principals of all 22 of the target schools by phone, email, and in person, inviting their participation and assistance in recruitment and dissemination of the electronic survey instruments.

This study included parents, teachers, and administrators from each of the 22 schools that serve middle school population of 6-8 grade students in the study district. The recruitment emails contained the embedded electronic survey link and were emailed and given in hard copy by the principal to the following groups of individuals in June, 2015:

1) Eighth grade administrators in each school (these included the principal, one eighth grade assistant principal and one eighth grade professional school guidance counselor) from each school to achieve a 95% response rate due to administrative turnover and reorganization in some schools).

2) Teachers of eighth grade students from each school (to achieve an 80% response rate based upon total number of eighth grade teachers who deliver direct instruction to students).

3) Eighth grade parents for whom the principal possessed email addresses. Initially in June, this survey administration only yielded a total of 90 parent responses from only 5 of the 22 schools. Therefore, a second parent survey window was opened in August and the surveys were re-administered through the school system's Chief of Instructional Technology who employed the system's SchoolMax parent engagement/information portal. He sent the parent recruitment email to all available parent emails in the total eighth grade student population in the 22 schools.

Since eighth grade student enrollment across the 22 middle schools ranged from125 – 430 with an average of 288 students per building, exact numbers of eighth grade instructional personnel and parents were not known. Therefore, through each school's principal, and through a personal follow-up email, I sent the survey to a total of 66 administrators (the principal, eighth grade assistant principal, and eighth grade professional school counselor = three from each school); all teachers in each school who provide instruction to eighth grade students (on average 10 teachers from each school = 220 teachers); and all parents of eighth grade students who voluntarily provided an email address of record to the school via the school system's SchoolMax portal (counted by the Chief IT Officer as 1,733 parents across 22 schools). Thus, the potential sample size in the study was expected to total 2,019 participants.

Instruments. The survey instruments in Appendix I were developed from an adaptation of three previously administered and peer-reviewed studies. They include:

1. The Harvard Graduate School of Education Certified Parental Engagement Survey for parents (Harvard Family Research Project, 2013);

2. The National Network of Partnership Schools/Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory School Parent Involvement Survey for Teachers (Epstein & Salinas, 1993).

3. The NCES Survey on Family and School Partnerships in Public Schools K–8 (Carey, Lewis, & Burns, 1998).

With permission, I drew questions from these three previously validated survey scales that closely matched Hill and Tyson's distinct themes and actionable constructs from their theory of academic socialization and made only minor approved modifications (Gehlbach & Brinkworth, 2011). The three chosen surveys were already aligned to Hill

and Tyson's theory and to each other. All of these instruments asked questions that addressed the presence of elements of middle school engagement by administrators, teachers, and parents as evinced by academic socialization theory as defined in those three survey instruments. However, I found the base three instruments in their entirety unsuitable for this study (e.g., all of the items did not completely comport with identifying the actionable constructs or strategies for academic socialization; and the number of items made a combined instrument unwieldy). Yet, the structure, scoring and design of those surveys influenced the survey questions I developed. The questions for my survey aligned with Hill and Tyson's meta-analysis (2009) incorporating their five factors and three themes emerged as reliable and measurable elements around which I also decided to capture data in my study. Within Theme 1: "Expectations" of academic socialization, three survey questions were aligned to the actionable constructs that define the actions of parents, teachers, and administrators regarding communication of academic expectations and promoting the value and utility of education. Additionally within Theme 1, four survey questions were aligned to capture data on the actionable constructs that define how respondents discuss learning strategies with children. For Theme 2: "Relevance," two survey questions addressed how parents, teachers, and administrators link school work with current life events. For Theme 3: "Aspirations," four questions sought frequencies around the behaviors that define how respondents foster educational and occupational aspirations. Also for Theme 3, three questions were aligned to capture how the respondents make preparations and plans for the future. Again, my surveys were designed as data capture instruments to serve the two main purposes of the questionnaires: (a) to draw accurate content and frequency information from each

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respondent; and (b) to provide a standard format on which the facts, comments, and attitudes can be recorded.

The study was conducted using online surveys created within and administered via an account with the University of Maryland Qualtrics platform. A specific survey was provided for each of the stakeholder groups: Eighth Grade Parents, Eighth Grade Teachers, and Eighth Grade Administrators (Appendix H). The Eighth Grade Parent Survey was available in English and Spanish (parents were able to choose the language they prefer at the beginning of the survey within the Qualtrics platform). The survey instrument for each stakeholder group consisted of 16 Likert scored items whose content assessed the frequency of the occurrence of each tested actionable construct of academic socialization with responses ranging from "Don't know" = 1 to "Daily" = 8. There were two additional content related questions and also up to 10 demographic questions depending on the surveyed group. The demographic questions afforded the researcher the opportunity to correlate the Likert question responses for each specific target population with specific demographic factors. The survey instrument required approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Upon opening the various surveys, the differences among the three instruments included specific attestations required to ensure that the correct parties were actually participating in the survey. For the teacher survey, each participant was asked to attest whether they provided direct instruction to eighth grade students. In this same manner, an administrator attestation asked if he or she had served as an administrator for eighth grade students in that school year. Upon opening of their specific survey, the parent was asked to attest if their child had matriculated in a middle school in the study district in the

previous year. If any stakeholder clicked "Yes," for these initial attestations, the survey continued to the Consent page. If an individual clicked "No," then the survey would immediately close. Next, on the typical Consent document, if a participant clicked "Yes" the survey opened; if the participant clicked "No" that they did not consent to participate, then the survey would immediately close. After the Consent document, the surveys asked each participant to identify their school affiliation by clicking on the school's name. To protect anonymity there was no role identifier requested for administrators or teachers. For parents an additional query requested the identification of their eighth grade child's gender. Later, in the demographic section of the survey, administrators and teachers were asked to identify their length in their position and the number of eighth grade students with whom they daily interact (administrators) or instruct (teachers).

      Timing. The actual period of conducting the survey was the last three weeks of the 2015 school year. Due to the ensuing bustle of activities leading to the eighth graders' transition to a different building and school community for high school, we noted that a shifting of parental attention from middle school focused activities toward a high school entry focus severely limited the parental responses in June to only 90 across only 5 of the 22 schools. Therefore, a second parental survey window was established in August to capture the attention and participation of rising eighth grade parents. There was essentially no difference between the parent survey in June and August. The difference among the parent groups was that the June group of parents was on their way out of the middle school, whereas the August group had an entire academic year ahead of them before they shifted their focus to high school.

To test the functionality and usability of the online survey, I distributed it to a test group of 10 former school administrators, teachers and parents who are not eligible to participate in the study in early June. The test group's responses and feedback indicated that the survey was readable, and easy to understand and complete. The test group participants reported that it took them less than 15 minutes to complete the survey.

I then directly contacted the 22 subject school principals to solicit their and their school's participation in the study. Principals were also asked to distribute, from the principal's secure email account, all recruitment emails with embedded survey links to their eighth grade administrators, teachers, and parents. Additionally, principals were asked to provide to the researcher the exact numbers of emails they sent to administrators, teachers and parents within the first three days of survey dissemination, and their assistance in disseminating weekly follow-up reminder emails to administrators, teachers and parents to complete the surveys. Once the principals agreed, I sent them each of the three study recruitment emails with the embedded survey instruments in which the Consent Form was embedded as the first question. In the initial launch of the parent survey the principal contacted all parents for whom the school had an established email address, in addition to notifying parents through end of the year newsletters and closing ceremonies for transitioning eighth grade students. The parent survey could also be converted into the predominant language of the home within the Qualtrics platform. A follow-up email reminder message was every four days to encourage participation to all three groups.

Analysis

Prior to data analysis, questions were recoded as shown below in Table 1 below.

The survey questions were recoded 1R-16R, for analysis as original survey questions #5

and #12 were removed from this part of the analysis since their multiple choice and text

responses did not align to the Likert scale points. Additionally, the original Likert scale

consisted of an eight point scale for each question: Don't Know (1), Twice a Year (2),

Quarterly (3), Monthly (4), 2-3 Times a Month (5), Weekly (6), 2-3 Times a Week (7),

and Daily (8). Because the "Don't Know" responses carried the same insignificance as a

"zero" they were removed and the remaining responses were recoded to provide a seven-

point Likert scale upon which the data were analyzed: Twice a Year (1), Quarterly (2),

Monthly (3), 2-3 Times a Month (4), Weekly (5), 2-3 Times a Week (6), and Daily (7).

Table 1
Recoded Survey Questions

Recoded Question	Parent	Teacher	Administrator
1R	How often do you meet in person with teachers of your eighth grade student to discuss academic expectations?	How often do you meet in person with parents of your eighth grade students to discuss academic expectations?	How often do you or another administrator in your school meet in person with parents of your eighth grade students to discuss academic expectations?
2R	How often do you discuss and reinforce academic expectations with your child?	How often do you discuss and reinforce academic expectations with eighth grade students?	How often do you or another administrator in your school discuss and reinforce academic expectations with eighth grade students?
3R	How often do you discuss the importance, values and utility of education with your child?	How often do you discuss the importance, values and utility of education with eighth grade students?	How often do you or another administrator in your school discuss the importance, values and utility of education with eighth grade students?
4R	How often do you work to develop and maintain home conditions or	How often do you provide parents and families with information/training on	How often do you or another administrator in your school provide parents and families with information/training on

	environments that support learning?	developing home conditions or environments that support learning?	developing home conditions or environments that support learning?
5R	How often do you monitor, discuss and extend schoolwork at home and in the community for your child?	How often do you provide information to families on how to monitor, discuss and apply schoolwork at home and in the community?	How often do you or another administrator in your school provide information to families on how to monitor, discuss and apply schoolwork at home and in the community?
6R	How often do you assist your child with mastering academic and social skills they need to improve?	How often do you provide ongoing and specific information to parents on how to assist students with mastering academic and social skills they need to improve?	How often do you or another administrator in your school provide ongoing and specific information to parents on how to assist students with mastering academic and social skills they need to improve?
7R	How often do you promote your child's participation in learning activities outside of school?	How often do you promote student participation in learning activities outside of school?	How often do you or another administrator in your school promote student participation in learning activities outside of school?
8R	How often do you link your child's school work to current life events?	How often do you link students' school work to current life events?	How often do you or another administrator in your school link students' school work to current life events?
9R	How often do you utilize community resources, such as businesses, libraries, parks and museums to extend your child's learning environment?	How often do you utilize community resources, such as businesses, libraries, parks and museums to enhance the learning environment?	How often do you or another administrator in your school utilize community resources, such as businesses, libraries, parks and museums to enhance the learning environment?
10R	How often do you discuss College/University opportunities to support your child's development of educational aspirations?	How often do you incorporate College/University Day or discussions to support student development of educational aspirations?	How often do you or another administrator in your school incorporate College/University Day or discussions to support student development of educational aspirations?
11R	How often do you discuss careers or expose your children to career opportunities to support development	How often do you incorporate Career Day activities to support student development of occupational aspirations?	How often do you or another administrator in your school incorporate Career Day activities to support student development of occupational

	of occupational aspirations?		aspirations?
12R	How often do you participate in Career Day at your child's school?	How often do you engage parents in visiting the school to share their educational and occupational information to enhance the learning environment?	How often do you or another administrator in your school engage parents in visiting the school to share their educational and occupational information to enhance the learning environment?
13R	How often do you discuss your educational and occupational information to support development of your child's educational and occupational aspirations?	How often do you discuss your own educational and occupational history to support development of your students' educational and occupational aspirations	How often do you or another administrator in your school discuss your own educational and occupational history to support development of your students' educational and occupational aspirations?
14R	How often do you work on preparing your child for the next academic year?	How often do you provide parents and families with information/training on preparing their children for the next academic year?	How often do you or another administrator in your school provide parents and families with information/training on preparing their children for the next academic year?
15R	How often do you stress the importance of your child doing things for themselves?	How often do you stress the importance of students doing things for themselves with your eighth grade parents?	How often do you or another administrator in your school stress the importance of students doing things for themselves with your eighth grade parents?
16R	How often do you give your child the opportunity to lead self-determined projects in order to help them learn how to work collaboratively with others?	How often do you give your students the opportunity to lead self-determined projects in order to help them learn how to work collaboratively with others?	How often do you or another administrator in your school give your students the opportunity to lead self-determined projects in order to help them learn how to work collaboratively with others?

All answers to each of the questionnaires were entered into a structured database (Excel Workbook 2010) to be examined individually per respondent group and that allowed for triangulation of the data from the similar questions across the three respondent/relationship groups. Data across schools was examined in the same manner to establish comparisons. Using SPSS, statistical data analysis applications made the

factoring of large numbers of items possible. The averaged responses were aligned by theme and factor/construct to calculate Cronbach's alpha for each related to operationalization of academic socialization themes and actionable constructs/factors. Cronbach's alpha is useful where all the questions are testing more or less the same thing or "factor."   Since there are multiple factors, I determined which questions tested which factors as aligned to Hill and Tyson's meta-analysis (2009). A One-Way Anova analysis was applied to compare overall means of the three subgroups' responses in response to research question number one. A "2-way Anova" was applied to discover observed variations in actionable constructs across the 22 middle schools in response to research question number two. For the third research question, an ordinary least squares multiple regression analysis explored how the demographical independent variables/confounding factors correlate to the expressed engagement frequencies related to the theory of academic socialization.

Chapter 3: Results and Conclusion

Introduction

In this chapter, I will present the results of my analyses. I will first describe the sample and will then present results by each research question. I will then report whether I have accepted or rejected the null hypothesis. Finally I will offer conclusions, implications for the district, and suggested recommendations for further investigations triggered by the findings of this study.

This study intended to investigate the frequency of occurrences of observable middle school parental engagement actions that aligned to the theoretical framework of academic socialization, as reported by three stakeholder groups: middle school administrators, teachers and parents. Data were collected via a web-based survey and then analyzed across the three themes and five actionable constructs of academic socialization to respond to the three research questions:

1. From the perspectives of three groups of adult stakeholders (who represent the school district) – middle school administrators, teachers and parents – how does the district "fare" in operationalizing Hill and Tyson's (2009) parental engagement actionable constructs for academic socialization?

2. Do district middle schools operationalize Hill and Tyson's theory of academic socialization differently?

3. How do demographic (e.g., race, income, educational level, etc.) factors correlate with which stakeholders engage in the actionable constructs of the theory of academic socialization?

My hypothesis was that the average responses of reported frequencies of actionable constructs for academic socialization by parents, teachers and administrators across the 22 grade 6-8 middle schools will show statistically significant differences based upon the different role perspectives through which they purportedly view middle school parent engagement. My null hypothesis was that the reported frequencies will not show statistically significant differences across the average responses of the reported frequencies of actionable constructs for academic socialization.

Sample

A web-based survey was distributed via email to all 22 6-8 grade middle school principals in the district, 22 middle school assistant principals, 22 8th grade counselors, 220 8th grade teachers and a convenience sample of 403 volunteer parents of 8th grade students from the aggregate parent population of 1,733 with accounts on SchoolMax. Table 2 elucidates the response rates for the administrator, teacher, and parent respondent/stakeholder groups.

Table 2
Survey Respondents by Stakeholder Group

	Number Surveyed	Number of Valid Surveys	Percent of Valid Returns
Parents	1733	332	19%
Teachers	222	36	16%
Administrators	66	15	23%

Demographic Data

Tables 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 present the responses to questions regarding decade of birth, gender, race/ethnicity, level of education, number of children in the household, parental income, educator experience in their perspective roles and educator eighth grade

parental experience. This demographic data were compiled to afford the opportunity to

examine the impact of these controlling variables on participant responses.

Table 3
Number and Percent of Stakeholders by Decade of Birth

Decade	Parents	Teachers	Administrators
1990-2000	13 (%)		
1980-1990	33 (10%)	6 (17%)	1 (7%)
1970-1980	138 (41%)	10 (28%)	6 (40%)
1960-1970	112 (34%)	9 (25%)	5 (33%)
Before 1960	23 (7%)	10 (28%)	3 (20%)
No Answer	13 (4%)	2 (5%)	
Total	332	36	15

Table 4
Administrator and Teacher Gender and Experience with 8th Graders

Years	Female Administrators	Male Administrators	Female Teachers	Male Teachers
1-2	2 (13%)		3 (9%)	3 (9%)
3-5	1 (7%)	2 (13%)	4 (11%)	3 (9%)
6-10	3 (20%)	2 (13%)	4 (11%)	4 (11%)
11-15	1 (7%)	2 (13%)	5 (%)	3 (9%)
16-20		1 (7%)	3 (9%)	2 (4%)
21 and above	1 (7%)		2 (4%)	
Total	8	7	21	15

In addition to the years of experience working with 8th grade students,

administrators and teachers were asked to indicate the number of 8th graders with whom

they interact on a typical day. Across the 15 valid survey responses from administrators,

data show that administrators reported that they might interact with 5 to 350 8th graders

on a typical day with a mean of 216 and median of 200 students. In the 36 valid teacher

surveys, data show that teacher respondents asserted that they teach from 13-130 students

per day, with a median of 97 students and mean of 82.

Table 5
Race/Ethnicity of the Three Stakeholder Groups

Ethnicity	Parents	Teachers	Administrators
African American/Black (3)	221 (67%)	23 (64%)	8 (53%)
White/Caucasian (5)	38 (11%)	5 (14%)	2 (13%)
Latino/Hispanic (4)	33 (10%)	1 (3%)	2 (13%)
Asian/Pacific Islander (2)	10 (3%)	2 (6%)	0
Multi-Racial (6)	16 (5%)	2 (6%)	1 (6%)
American Indian (1)	3 (1%)		1 (6%)
Preferred Not to Answer	11 (3%)	3 (8%)	1 (6%)
Total	332	36	15

Table 6
Educational Level Attained of the Three Stakeholder Groups

Level	Parents	Teachers	Administrators
Middle School (-1)	6 (2%)		
High School (0)	74 (22%)		
Bachelor's Degree (1)	138 (42%)	6 (17%)	
Master's Degree (2)	71 (22%)	25 (69%)	10 (66%)
Specialist (3)	3 (1%)	1 (3%)	
Educational Doctorate (4)	5 (1.5%)	2 (5.5%)	4 (27%)
Other Doctorate (5)	23 (7%)	2 (5.5%)	1 (7%)
Preferred Not to Answer	12 (3.6%)		
Total	332	36	15

Table 7
Parent/Family Income

Income	Parents
$0 - $24,999 (1)	13 (3.9%)
$25,000 - $49,999 (2)	33 (9.9%)
$50,000 - $74,999 (3)	41 (12%)
$75,000 - $99,999 (4)	25 (7.5%)

$100,000 - $124,999 (5)	38 (11.5%)
$125,000 - $149,999 (6)	22 (6.6%)
$150,000 - $174,999 (7)	22 (6.6%)
$175,000 - $199,999 (8)	28 (8.4%)
Preferred Not to Answer (9)	88 (27%)
No Answer	22 (6.6%)
Total	332

Although 33% of parents surveyed preferred not to answer this question about income, approximately 63% of families reported incomes of over $30,000 or above the level of eligibility for Free and Reduced Meals. Nearly 33% of the families reported incomes of over $100,000.

Table 8
Children in Household in Addition to 8th Grade Child

Number of Additional Children	Households
1	98 (30%)
2	113 (34%)
3	63 (19%)
4	23 (7%)
5	13 (4%)
More than 5	6 (1.8%)
No Answer	16 (4.8%)
Total	332

Finally, Table 9 presents data reported by administrators and teachers as to whether they are currently, or have ever been, a parent of an 8th grade student.

Table 9
Administrator and Teacher Experience as Parent of an 8th Grade Student

Parent of an 8th Grader	Administrator	Teacher
Yes	9 (60%)	16 (44%)
No	6 (40%)	20 (56%)
Total	15	36

Responses to Survey Questions

The survey contained 18 questions related to parental engagement behaviors. Sixteen of the questions were Likert scaled (1 = Twice a Year, 2 = Quarterly, 3 = Monthly, 4 = 2-3 Times a Month. 5 = Weekly, 6 = 2-3 Times a Week, and 7 = Daily and two were open-ended. The first step in analyzing the responses involved basic descriptive analyses of the 16 Likert scaled questions. Table 10 presents the frequencies, means and standard deviations for the 16 questions. Questions 5 and 12, which allowed respondents to check all that applied are presented in Tables 11 and 12.

Response Frequency Tables

Table 10
Means and Standard Deviation by Response Items for Parents, Teachers, and Administrators

Themes/Factor/Item	Parent (N= 332)		Teacher (N= 36)		Administrator (N= 15)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Theme 1: Expectations	5.00	1.15	3.29	0.95	4.12	1.40
Factor 1: CommExpectations	4.38	1.20	4.16	1.09	4.89	1.19
Item 1	1.64	1.47	2.00	1.51	4.13	1.64
Item 2	5.60	1.81	5.25	1.25	5.33	1.23
Item 3	5.91	1.54	5.22	1.41	5.20	1.32
Factor 2: Disc Learn Strategies	5.47	1.43	2.64	1.07	3.55	1.67
Item 4	6.26	1.46	2.33	1.69	3.87	1.68
Item 5	5.19	2.31	2.64	1.66	3.53	1.96
Item 6	5.56	1.88	2.28	1.54	3.27	1.92
Item 7	4.86	2.18	3.31	1.97	4.60	1.53
Theme 2: Relevance	4.06	1.92	3.62	0.83	3.83	1.37
Factor 3: Link Current Events	4.06	1.92	3.62	0.83	3.83	1.37
Item 8	4.65	2.41	4.89	1.14	3.07	1.50
Item 9	3.47	2.06	2.36	1.42	2.93	1.62
Theme 3: Aspirations	4.00	1.40	2.46	1.04	2.52	1.25
Factor 4: Foster Ed/OccAspir	3.26	1.52	2.04	1.16	2.18	1.21
Item 10	4.27	2.08	1.94	1.74	1.07	2.12
Item 11	4.31	2.15	1.22	1,49	1.80	1.90
Item 12	0.60	1.37	1.61	1.42	2.93	1.86
Item 13	3.86	2.37	3.39	1.90	2.13	1.62

Factor 5: Future Plan/Prep	4.98	1.69	3.03	1.22	2.98	1.63
Item 14	4.17	2.38	2.03	1.46	3.27	1.77
Item 15	6.10	1.72	2.97	1.65	3.53	2.09
Item 16	4.69	2.53	4.08	1.78	3.47	2.03

The two multiple response questions were, "Check every action that you take as a parent (or suggest to parents as an administrator or teacher) to develop and maintain home conditions or environments that support learning." And, "How far would you like for your child (as a parent) to progress in education (or how far do you promote students to go as a teacher or administrator)? Tables 11 and 12 present the responses by stakeholder group for these open-ended questions.

Table 11

Actions Taken to Develop and Maintain Conditions or Environments that Support Learning

Actions	Parent (N= 332)		Teacher (N= 36)		Administrator (N= 15)	
	Responses	%	Responses	%	Responses	%
Limit television	262	79	8	22	7	43
Curtail phone use/texting	220	57	13	36	9	61
Limit computer and internet use for activities other than homework	227	66	10	28	6	41
Ensure eight hours of sleep	266	80	11	31	5	38
Provide healthy meals and snacks	297	89	10	28	5	38
Limit friend visitations during the school week	186	56	3	8	3	20
Create structured play and interaction with other children	119	36	5	14	3	23
Establish an equipped and distraction free area for studying and homework	234	70	12	33	6	41
Allow student to set homework and study hours	184	55	12	33	7	45
Monitor, discuss, and review school work and homework	289	87	22	61	10	64

	234	70	9	25	3	16
Provide age appropriate reading and resource materials	234	70	9	25	3	16

Table 12

Desired Educational Attainment Level of Students

Education Attainment	Parent (N= 332) Frequency	Teacher (N= 36) Frequency	Administrator (N= 15) Frequency
Finish middle school	0	0	0
Attend high school	0	1	0
Graduate from high school	0	1	0
Attend technical or trade school	2	1	1
Attend some college	3	3	1
Graduate from college	93	19	8
Obtain a master's degree	108	3	1
Obtain a doctorate	126	8	4

Reliability Analysis

The second step in the analysis was to determine the relationships among items within themes and factors. Cronbach's alpha was used to measure reliability, that is, how consistently the survey questions in each factor or theme clustered together in my sample. As a data tool, the Cronbach's alpha reduced the number of survey items from 18 to 5, thus collapsing the survey items into composite variables to show how they come together in my sample. Statistically, 0.7 was the cutoff between reliable and not reliable for this study, demonstrating a 70% reliability level. Based on that determination Table 13 presents the correlations data showing that the most reliable factors were Factor 2 ($\alpha=0.77$) and Factor 4 ($\alpha=0.71$), while the most reliable themes were Theme 1 ($\alpha=0.77$) and Theme 3 ($\alpha=0.79$). While the other factors and theme were not as reliable, since they

were not particularly low, I kept them in the analysis in order to align with Hill and

Tyson's (2009) model. The low numbers were due to the small sample size. Another

possible reason for the lower numbers could have been the "statistical noise" introduced

as a result of developing the survey questions from three different studies not perfectly

aligned to Hill and Tyson (2009).

Table 13
Cronbach Alpha α

	α	Number of Items
Factor 1 – Communicate Expectations	0.58	3
Factor 2 – Discuss Learning Strategies	0.77	4
Factor 3 – Link to Current Events	0.61	2
Factor 4 – Foster Educational and Occupational Aspirations	0.71	4
Factor 5 – Make Future Plans and Preparations	0.66	3
Theme 1 – Expectations	0.77	7
Theme 2 – Relevance	0.61	2
Theme 3 – Aspirations	0.79	7

Testing the Research Questions

The third step of the analysis was to investigate the three research questions of

this study. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used and the level of significance

.05 was used for each statistical analysis used in this study. This is consistent with

commonly used statistical practices (Green & Salkind, 2011).

Research Question One. The first research question was: "How does the district

"fare" in operationalizing Hill and Tyson's (2009) parental engagement five actionable

constructs and its three themes?" To investigate research question 1, a one-way analysis

of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare differences in mean factor and theme ratings

across the three respondent groups. The data from this analysis are displayed in Table

14. The ANOVA showed significant differences in the means across stakeholder groups

for Themes 1 and 3 and for Factors 2, 4, and 5 with significance values of .000.

Rationalizations about the meaning of these significant mean response variances will be

shared in the discussion section.

Table 14
One-Way ANOVA Comparing Mean Factor and Theme Ratings Across Stakeholder
Group

Factor		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
F1Comm Expect	Between Groups	5.67	2	2.84	1.997	.14
	Within Groups	539.34	380	1.42		
	Total	545.01	382			
F2 DiscLearnStrat	Between Groups	298.34	2	149.17	74.66	.000
	Within Groups	759.26	380	1.99		
	Total	1057.60	382			
F3 LinkCurrEvents	Between Groups	6.64	2	3.32	.99	.372
	Within Groups	1273.81	380	3.35		
	Total	1280.45	382			
F4 FosterEdOccAsp	Between Groups	61.63	2	30.81	14.09	.000
	Within Groups	831.44	380	2.18		
	Total	893.08	382			
F5 FuturePlanPrep	Between Groups	171.74	2	85.87	31.65	.000
	Within Groups	1030.99	380	2.71		
	Total	1202.73	382			
Themes						
T1 Expectations	Between Groups	102.47	2	51.23	39.24	.000
	Within Groups	496.21	380	1.30		
	Total	598.68	382			
T2 Relevance	Between Groups	6.64	2	3.32	.991	.372
	Within Groups	1273.81	380	3.35		
	Total	1280.45	382			
T3 Aspirations	Between Groups	101.93	2	50.96	27.43	.000
	Within Groups	706.00	380	1.85		
	Total	807.94	382			

Note. F = Factor
T = Theme

Research Question Two. The second research question was: "What are the observed variations in actionable constructs across middle schools in the district?" To investigate that research question, a two-way ANOVA was used to compare the amount of variance in the mean factor and theme ratings across both the 22 study schools and the three respondent/relationship groups. From the large table of data, there were no statistically significant differences across schools at the .05 level. Because of the size of the irrelevant statistical array generated by SPSS, it was not necessary to include it in this dissertation.

Research Question Three. The final research question was: "How do demographic (e.g., race, income, educational level, etc.) factors correlate with which stakeholders engage in the actionable constructs of the theory of academic socialization?" An Ordinary Least Squares Multiple Regression Analysis was used to address this research question. For the two respondent groups, parents and teachers, the dependent variables were the mean ratings for each of the five factors and three themes. However, due to the low number of administrator responses, they were omitted from this level of analysis.

The independent variables for parents follow as indicators: African American; Hispanic; Over age 45; Native English speaker; Highest degree attained; Household income; and Number of children. Note: an indicator variable means that the variable was set to one for members of the group and zero for all others in order to isolate the effect for each group.

The indicator variables for African Americans and Hispanics were included

because these groups are of particular interest to PGCPS due to the systemic demographical data of 59% African American and 24% Hispanic. The over-45 indicator tests whether older parents employ different strategies than younger parents. The native English speaker indicator was included to show if parents who are non-native speakers are significantly different from the other parents in the district. The highest degree attained variable helped to test whether parental education was correlated with parental engagement strategies as was cited in Moore (2009). Similarly, the household income and number of children variables were included to see if there were correlations between income and family size and parental engagement strategies.

The independent variables for teachers follow as indicators: African American; Hispanic; Over age 45; Post-baccalaureate; Experience; Grade 8 parent; and Number of eighth grade student contacts per day. For teachers, again the indicator variables for African Americans and Hispanics were included because these groups are of particular interest to PGCPS. The over-45 indicator tests whether older teachers employ different strategies than younger teachers. The highest degree attained variable helped to test whether teacher education was correlated with parental engagement strategies. Similarly, the teacher experience levels with eighth grade students, whether or not the teacher was or had ever been a parent of an eighth grade student and the levels of daily teaching contact with eighth grade students were variables included to see if there were correlations between professional and personal experience and parental engagement strategies. Tables 15 and 16 show the results for parents and teachers respectively. Important to note are the p values represented with asterisks for degree of significant variance.

Table 15

Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Parent Respondents

Predictors (Constant)	F1 Comm Exp	F2 DisLrn gStr	F3 LnkC Ev	F4 FEdO Asp	F5 FuPlPr	T1 Expec	T2 Rel	T3 Asp
AA	.38	.10	.097	.47	-.02***	.22	.097*	.26
	(.17)	(.20)	(.29)	(.23)	(.24)	(.16)	(.29)	(.20)
	.03	.61	.74	.04	.94	.17	.74	.20
Hisp	.095	-.93	-.70	.60	-.71***	-.49***	-.70	.04
	(.36)	(.42)	(.60)	(.47)	(.51)	(.33)	(.60)	(.42)
	.79	.03	.25	.20	.16	.14	.25	.93
Over 45	.11	-.20***	-.06***	-.13***	-.46***	-.08***	-.06***	-.27***
	(.16)	(.19)	(.27)	(.21)	(.23)	(.15)	(.27)	(.19)
	.49	.30	.82	.54	.05	.66	.82	.16
Nat_Eng	-.07***	.07	-.04	-.53***	-.08***	.01**	-.04***	-.33***
	(.25)	(.29)	(.42)	(.33)	(.35)	(.23)	(.42)	(.29)
	.79	.82	.93	.11	.83	.97	.93	.26
Post_Bac	-.01***	-.08***	.48	.45	-.07***	-.05***	.48	.23
	(.17)	(.20)	(.29)	(.22)	(.24)	(.16)	(.29)	(.20)
	.94	.71	.09	.05	.78	.75	.09	.26
Income_Val	8.79E-7	3.03E-6	2.70E-6	2.29E-6	-5.11E-7	2.11E-6	2.70E-6	1.09E-6
	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)
	.55	.08	.28	.24	.81	.12	.28	.53
Num_Children	.01	-.07	-.43	.14	.03	-.04***	-.04***	.10
	(.07)	(.08)	(.12)	(.09)	(.10)	(.07)	(.12)	(.08)
	.90	.41	.72	.13	.74	.58	.72	.26

Note

*p value < 0.1

**p value < 0.05

***p value < 0.01

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Table 16

Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Teacher Respondents

Predictors (Constant)	F1 CmExp	F2 DisLS	F3 LnkCE	F4 FEdO Asp	F5 FuPlPr	T1 Expec	T2 Rel	T3 Asp
AA	.95	.06	.48	.55	-.34***	.37	.48	.17
	(.43)	(.41)	(.35)	(.50)	(.54)	(.37)	(35)	(.46)
	.03	.89	.18	.29	.53	.32	.18	.72
Hisp	1.07	.37	1.287	.464	.14	.67	1.287	.33
	(1.1)	(1.1)	(.89)	(1.3)	(1.4)	(.94)	(.89)	(1.2)
	.33	.73	.16	.72		.484	.16	.79
Over 45	.80	.99	-.39***	-.58***	-.73***	-.91***	-.39***	-.64***
	(.43)	(.42)	(.36)	(.51)	(.55)	(.38)	(.36)	(.47)
	.08	.03	.28	.27	.192	.02	.28	.19
Post_Bac	.27	1.3	-.29***	-.01***	.29	-.05***	-.30***	.12
	(.47)	(.45)	(.39)	(.55)	(.59)	(.41)	(.39)	(.51)
	.56	.78	.45	.98	.63	.912	.45	.82
Experience	.05**	.08**	.003***	-.06***	.03**	.07*	.003***	-.02***
	(.03)	(.01)	(.03)	(.04)	(.04)	(.03)	(.03)	(.04)
	.12	.01	.92	.12	.53	.02	.92	.51
G8 Parent	.51	.618	.71	.832	.13	.57	.71	.53
	(.46)	(.443)	(.38)	(.54)	(.58)	(.40)	(.38)	(.50)
	.28	.174	.07	.14	.83	.16	.07	.30
G8 Stud Count	.004***	.003***	.003***	.001***	.01**	.01**	.003***	.003***
	(.01)	(.01)	(.004)	(.01)	(.01)	(.004)	(.004)	(.006)
	.48	.61	.53	.86	.42	.50	.529	.608

Note

*p value < 0.1

**p value < 0.05

***p value < 0.01

Significant observations from these two data displays follow in the discussion section.

Discussion

This study investigated the occurrences of observable middle school parental engagement actions that aligned to the theoretical framework of academic socialization as reported by three stakeholder groups: middle school administrators, teachers, and parents.

Analyses of the survey data lead to the discovery of answers to the three research questions:

1. From the perspectives of three groups of adult stakeholders (who represent the school district) – middle school administrators, teachers and parents – how does the district "fare" in operationalizing Hill and Tyson's (2009) parental engagement actionable constructs for academic socialization?

2. Do district middle schools operationalize Hill and Tyson's theory of academic socialization differently?

3. How do demographic (e.g., race, income, educational level, etc.) factors correlate with which stakeholders engage in the actionable constructs of the theory of academic socialization?

Limitations. It is important to note that several limitations impacted the findings that will be discussed in this section. One chief source of limitation of this study was that there was not a random sampling of participants, but rather a purposeful sample composed of targeted groups of administrators, teachers, and parents in only 22 middle schools in the study district. Thereby an element of inherent bias was introduced because all individuals who chose to participate fell within a well-defined group of recruited individuals. A second limitation is the small sample size across all three stakeholder groups. The third limitation involved timing of the survey launch that adversely affected response rates and resulting sample size for all three stakeholder groups. The survey was distributed in mid-late June, when eighth grade administrator and teacher attention is shifting to school year close-out activities. Likewise, parents' thoughts and attention were shifting towards their students' transitional activities out of middle school and into

high school. The timing is a contributing factor to the low response rates for all three

stakeholder groups, but especially for parent respondents, as the June 30th count showed

only 90 parents across the 22 schools had participated. This low number of parent

responses precipitated a second launch of the parent survey in August to incorporate a

new parent survey audience of incoming/rising eighth grade parents whose children had

matriculated in a middle school in the study district the year before. Another limitation

involved staff turnover that occurred at the end and beginning of the school year. During

the survey window, two of the participating schools received new principals and four

received new eighth grade assistant principals. Additionally 23 eighth grade teachers

across the schools informed me directly that they were transitioning to another school or

job in the study district. Another limitation might have been attitudes and behaviors of

respondents due to the high volume of surveys and questionnaires implemented by other

offices in the study district during this same period in the school year. Also this study

was limited to the extent that any parent, teacher or administrator did not understand the

questions that were different from traditional survey questions asked in the system's

climate survey and PTA surveys that are all based on elementary engagement questions.

Parents, teachers and administrators might not have trusted that they would remain

anonymous and/or that that their answers would be kept confidential. Another limitation

was the ability of administrators and teachers to reflect honestly on their experiences with

parents and to report candidly their perceptions of parental engagement since parent

engagement is a component of the annual evaluation for principals and teachers.

Limitation was that some parents felt that the questions about income and race were

intrusive. Also, an important design limitation was that the data was to be collected from

specific schools in one school district and may not generalize to schools in districts around the country.

Answer to Research Question One. The first research question was: "How does the district "fare" in operationalizing Hill and Tyson's parental engagement five actionable constructs and its three themes?" This study found that even though all three stakeholder groups reported implementation of all actionable constructs of Hill and Tyson's theoretical framework of academic socialization, the three stakeholder groups are not on the same page as evinced by varying levels of factor and item implementation. The data from the One-way ANOVA used to investigate this question, as displayed in Table 14, showed significant differences in the means across stakeholder groups for Themes 1 and 3 and for Factors 2, 4, and 5 with significance values of .000.

Additionally, connecting the ANOVA in Table 14 back to the Mean Response and Standard Deviation data in Table 10 gives a more detailed analysis in support of the findings in the ANOVA. For example, for Theme 1: Expectations the mean value for parent responses was higher at 5.00 than both teacher responses (3.29) and administrator responses (4.12). The same type of variance was found for Theme 3: Aspirations, where the mean value for parent responses was higher at 4.00 than both the teachers and the administrators at 2.46 and 2.52 respectively.

Likewise, analysis of the variance among the factors showed significant differences across the stakeholder groups. Factor 2: Discuss Learning Strategies revealed a higher parent mean of 5.47 in comparison to the teacher mean of 2.64 and the administrator mean of 3.55. Likewise Factor 4: Foster Educational and Occupational Aspirations evinced a variance where parent mean responses were 3.26 as opposed to

teachers at 2.04 and administrators with a mean response rate of 2.18.

Taking a deeper look at the items aligned to the aforementioned themes and factors, I found even greater variance. Within Factor 2: Discuss Learning Strategies, Items 4, 5, and 6 all displayed major variance between the three stakeholder groups' mean response rates. Item 4 asked how often stakeholders reinforce home conditions or environments that support learning. Parents' mean response rate was 6.26, but teacher and administrator much lower means were 2.33 and 3.87 respectively. Item 5 asked about how often school work is extended and applied at home and in the community, yielding a 5.19 parent response rate, in comparison to the lower response rate of 2.64 for teachers and 3.53 for administrators. Likewise Item 6 responses manifested significant variance. When asked how often stakeholder assist with mastering academic and social skills needed to improve, strikingly, parents' mean response was 5.56, but teachers at 2.28 and administrators at 3.27 showed a significant difference. Within Factor 4: Foster Educational and Occupational Aspirations, Items 10 and 11 showed major variance between the means of the three stakeholder groups as did Items 14 and 15. Item 10 dealt with discussing college/university opportunities. The parent mean response measure of 4.27 almost tripled the mean response rates of both teachers (1.94) and administrators (1.07). For Item 11, focused on discussing and/or exposing eighth graders to career opportunities, again the parent mean response measure of 4.31 nearly tripled the mean response rates of both teachers (1.22) and administrators (1.80). Item 14 asked about helping eighth graders prepare for the next year. Parental mean response was 4.17, varying from teachers at 2.03 and administrators at 3.27. Finally, for Item 15, the parent mean response score for how often stakeholders stress the importance of children doing

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things for themselves was high at 6.10, while teacher and administrator mean response scores were 2.97 and 3.53 respectively.

Thus, even though there is evidence of academic socialization as a parental engagement strategy existing in the study district's middle schools, the variance across the three stakeholder groups highlights significant incongruence in middle school parent engagement efforts aligned to academic socialization. The variance also suggests possible incoherence about role responsibility that interferes with the consistent practices involved in utilizing academic socialization as a model of parent engagement. The variance indicates that the three key stakeholder groups most actively engaged in middle school parental engagement are not on the same page of understanding and application of academic socialization as a form of middle school parental engagement, nor possibly how to collaboratively and consciously link this particular set of behaviors to improving student academic outcomes. This then, could be one factor that contributes to a less than concerted effort of effective engagement to meet the needs of middle school students. From my experience, the significant differences anecdotally highlight educators' expressed beliefs that some of the items surveyed are "not their job as educators," thus demonstrating a lack of knowledge and disconnect to the research on academic socialization that speaks to the shared responsibility for parents and educators to work together in the best interests of children (Mapp, 2011; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Comer, 1994). Interestingly, the high mean response levels from parents, supports James Comer's perennial assertion that all parents, regardless of income, education, or cultural background, are involved in their children's learning and want their children to do well (Comer, 1994).

Answer to Research Question Two. Question two sought to discover variance across the study's 22 middle schools by stakeholder group for implementation of actionable constructs of academic socialization. The data from a two-way ANOVA found there were no statistically significant differences across schools at the .05 level. Therefore, the answer to the question of whether district middle schools operationalize Hill and Tyson's theory of academic socialization differently is "No."

Answer to Research Question Three. The third research question sought correlations between parents' and teachers' demographic data and their reported academic socialization engagement activities. For each regression, there was an estimated coefficient, the B (or beta), and an associated p-value that showed the statistical significance of the estimated coefficient. When an estimated coefficient was negative, then that independent variable had a negative correlation with the dependent variable. In the regression tables 15 and 16, most noticeably, both parent and teacher regression data for the indicator Over 45 yielded many negative estimated coefficients and associated p-values of <.05. Negative estimated coefficients were found in the following: Factor 2: Discuss Learning Strategies (parent = -.20); Factor 3: Link Learning to Current Events (parent = -.06 and teacher -.39); Factor 4: Foster Educational and Occupational Aspirations (parent = -.13; and teacher = -.58); Factor 5 Future Planning and Preparation (parent = -.46; and teacher = -.73); Theme 1: Expectations (parent = -.80; and teacher = -.91); Theme 2: Relevance (parent = -.20; and teacher = -.39); and Theme 3: Aspirations (parent = -.27; and teacher = -.64). P-values for all of the aforementioned factors and themes were <0.01. This negative correlation between the Over 45 age independent variable and the factors and themes of academic socialization does not imply causation;

however, as statistics literature states, there may be an unknown factor that influences both variables similarly to answer the question, "Why don't teachers and parents over the age of 45 perform these academic socialization activities?"

From my experience as a practitioner in the area of parent and family engagement and as a parent in the study district, I can anecdotally attest that as parents and educators enter the mid-forty age range, they are entering the stages of a mid-life transition where they are confronted with what psychologists refer to as mid-life restlessness, discontent, and over-extension that can cause a re-evaluation of priorities (Aldwin & Levenson, 2001). Table 3 showed demographic data illuminating that the majority of survey participants were born in the decade 1960-1970 making them over 45: 112 parents (34%); 9 teachers (25%); and 5 administrators (33%). Perhaps the negative correlation between actualization of academic socialization practices and the Over 45 independent variable is a reflection of the restlessness, angst, or exhaustion of this life stage for parents and teachers and negatively impacts their willingness to implement these academic socialization practices.

Another significant area of negative correlations for teachers was the independent variable Experience where all five factors and three themes showed negative estimated coefficients, the B (or beta), and an associated p-value that showed the statistical significance of the estimated coefficient. This data highlights many assertions in research that teachers do not often receive adequate pre-service training or in-service coaching or experiential learning that can give them the experience and/or confidence needed to operationalize parental engagement strategies (Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Greenwood & Hickman, 1991; Dornbusch & Ritter, 1988).

Rejection of the null hypothesis. Statistical analysis of the survey data led to the rejection of the null hypothesis that the reported frequencies will **not** show statistically significant differences across the average responses of the reported frequencies of actionable constructs for academic socialization. In the ANOVA, Factors #2 and #4 and Themes #1 and #3 all had p-values of less than the alpha level (.05) indicating that the average responses for those factors and themes yielded statistically significant differences in the means of data sets across respondent groups. Likewise, in the Ordinary Least Squares Multiple Regression Analysis, the vast number of negative coefficients and p-values of <.01 indicated highly significant negative correlations. However, possible limitations of the data are the low R-square scores. We found that he low R-squared values are a result of the small sample data and the model. Nevertheless, in those few cases where there was a statistically significant t-test, the low R-square did not diminish the fact that there is a correlation between that independent variable and the dependent variable. This significant difference across the most reliable factors and themes indicates that application of the theoretical framework of academic socialization is inconsistently evinced across the three main adult stakeholders most actively engaged in middle school parental engagement.

Conclusion

As the concerns for this study regarded the lack of knowledge about parental engagement in middle schools in the study district's 22 middle schools that serve grades 6-8, the investigation allowed for the discovery that district's middle school parents, teachers and administrators implement actionable constructs aligned to the theoretical framework, but at varied frequency levels across some of the most reliable concurrent

actionable constructs. This difference was projected by Hill and Tyson when they asserted that academic socialization creates an engagement strategy "more dependent on parents' knowledge and resources and a school's ability to provide such information to parents than are other types of engagement (2009)."

To address the incoherence attributed to the variance in responses, the district should start with a collaboratively developed systemic definition, vision and action plan for middle school parent engagement aligned with academic socialization as its research-based theoretical framework. With this step, the district could assign measureable goals for middle school parental engagement in a specific content area such as literacy. The next step in the solution could be to provide infrastructural support via human capital and material resources that could be used to continuously build capacity of middle school staff members and parents for effective use of academic socialization constructs for engagement. Thus, the district can strategically channel and monitor middle school parent engagement actions for administrators, teachers and parents towards the academic socialization actionable constructs to improve student academic achievement outcomes, effective psycho-social development of adolescents and as a key ingredient for establishing and maintaining an effective schools. Administrators and teachers could become more aware of the critical roles they play in joining parents in partnership activities that build their capacity for effective employment of academic socialization strategies through a systemic and coordinated approach.

Thirdly, following the mantra, "What gets monitored gets done effectively," the system could establish benchmarks and measureable outcomes to ascertain results, benefits and impact of academic socialization engagement strategies in middle schools.

The study district could consistently seek to actualize its data-driven and outcome focus through triangulation of family engagement data from 1) school climate surveys and customer service feedback, 2) observable participation in partnership activities suggested by the adopted theoretical framework with a continuous feedback loop, 3) changes in student academic outcomes around the targeted instructional initiative of literacy, and 4) changes in student aspirational goals to move towards college and career readiness. Additionally, as a result of this study, I hope to support the district's identification of "quality strategic actions" that will move the district towards improved school and district parent engagement practices focused upon improved middle school student outcomes relevant to this stage of development. These could include implementing and then measuring the impact of behaviors such as:

1. Surveying parents and teachers to understand their perspective on parent engagement at the middle school level;

2. Investigating how parents want to be engaged, and how teachers and administrators want parents to be engaged;

3. Working to create a common understanding of how middle school parents could best support their child's education and how teachers could best communicate with parents (this might be accomplished through focus group discussions, informational newsletters, websites or blogs, flyers, or other strategies);

4. Identifying barriers to achievement within middle schools, and identifying how parents can help address these challenges;

5. Giving teachers training on how to develop middle school homework assignments that engage parents;

6. Regularly involving parents in their child's homework, and reporting on the results of doing so;

7. Talking clearly to parents about the courses, thinking skills, and grades their students will need to succeed; and

8. Continuing to survey or otherwise track the effects of engagement, in order to use schools' time and resources wisely.

In conclusion, not only did this study fill this gap in the research, but this examination revealed useful and impactful strategies for practitioners in all middle schools in the district. As a consequence, this study could ultimately influence school and school system policies and procedures around effective parental engagement at all levels and help develop the collective efficacy around parent and family engagement in the study district. Fortunately, due to the recent systemic reorganization within the study district, the Chief Executive Officer has made "Increasing Family and Community Engagement" one of the five "pillars" upholding the goal of "Outstanding Academic Achievement for All Students." This research also informs the study district's recently re-created Department of Family and Community Engagement towards its collaborative development and implementation of a research-based systemic approach to guide all schools in the adoption of proven parental engagement strategies. Thus this study supports the findings from the Chief Executive's Transition Team Report (2013) that espoused the need for central office assistance to guide and provide input, or evaluate and document processes, in order to ensure sound and equitable practices, or at a minimum, ensure adherence to school system policies and recommended administrative procedures as advised by Redding and others (2011).

The systemic approach will include focused professional development for administrators, teachers, and central office staff, and community engagement sessions for parents to build every stakeholder's capacity for efficacious engagement through academic socialization theory to improve student outcomes. Such an approach could lead to the creation of what Carol Dweck (2006) refers to as a "growth mindset," where all stakeholders continuously learn and grow together through a systemic approach to purposeful family engagement. As a result, schools will no longer be "on their own" to figure out and develop processes, strategies and programs for involving and/or engaging parents, families and communities in the educational process. Additionally, this study points the way for developing and sustaining extensive mechanisms for observing, collecting data about engagement efforts and evaluating effectiveness in terms of student outcomes.

This study also adds to the literature toward providing new data on the perceptions of those key middle school adult stakeholders who all have significant roles to play as viewed through the lenses of the theoretical framework of academic socialization. Findings from this study have inspired rich ideas for future research such as:

1. Which of the different academic socialization parental engagement factors increase student achievement outcomes?

2. What are administrator, teacher and parent efficacy beliefs about increasing middle school parent engagement?

3. What strategic systemic actions help practitioners to operationalize academic socialization's research-based practices for middle school parent engagement?

4. What courses do colleges and universities offer in preservice training to prepare educators to effectively engage parents at every level of preK-12 education with particular attention middle school engagement?

5. What community and school system structure are established to help parents and educators collaboratively support developmental and transitional stages for children?

6. How can a school district's academic focus on literacy be leveraged as a possible construct around which to measure the results of targeted parent engagement initiatives that build collaborative stakeholder relationships focused upon improved outcomes for students?

As James Comer has maintained since 1968, "Nothing is more important than the quality of relationships between and among students, staffs, and families," in promoting and sustaining collaborative efforts between all stakeholders involved in the lives of children towards ensuring their positive academic and psycho-social development outcomes (Comer, 1988).

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Academic Socialization Diagrams

Examining Middle School Parental Engagement: Conceptual Map for Academic Socialization (AS)

Key: P =Parent; AD =Administrator; T =Teacher; SQ =Survey Question; R =Recoded

Appendix A continued

Examining Middle School Parental Engagement: Conceptual Map for Academic Socialization (AS)

Key: P =Parent; AD =Administrator; T =Teacher; SQ =Survey Question; R =Recoded

AS Theme 1AD: Expectations

AS Factor/Actionable Construct 1AD:

Administrators communicate academic expectations and promote the value and utility of education

SQ#1, SQ#2, SQ#3

AS Factor/Actionable Construct 2AD:
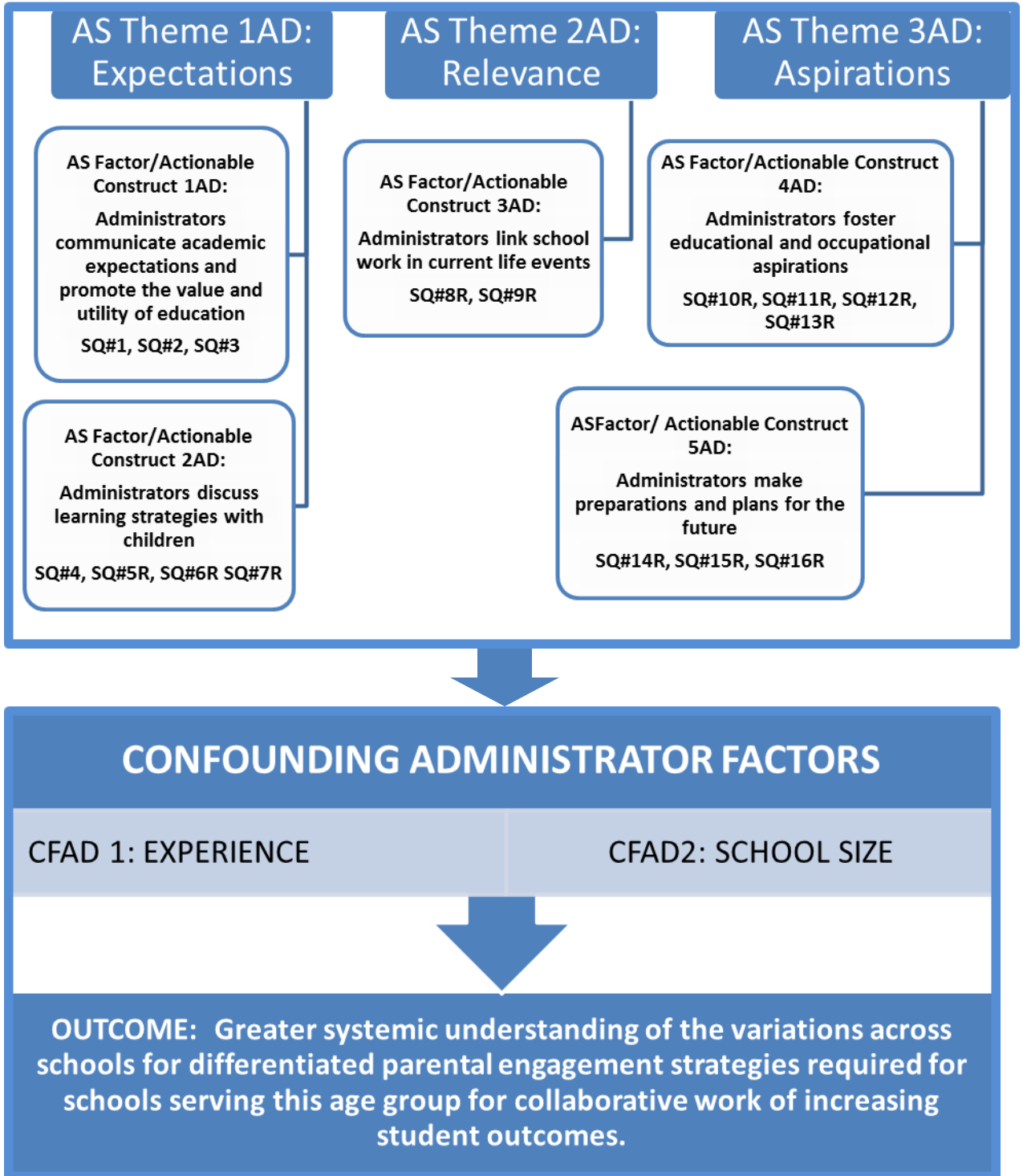
Administrators discuss learning strategies with children

SQ#4, SQ#5R, SQ#6R SQ#7R

AS Theme 2AD: Relevance

AS Factor/Actionable Construct 3AD:

Administrators link school work in current life events

SQ#8R, SQ#9R

AS Theme 3AD: Aspirations

AS Factor/Actionable Construct 4AD:

Administrators foster educational and occupational aspirations

SQ#10R, SQ#11R, SQ#12R, SQ#13R

ASFactor/ Actionable Construct 5AD:

Administrators make preparations and plans for the future

SQ#14R, SQ#15R, SQ#16R

CONFOUNDING ADMINISTRATOR FACTORS

CFAD 1: EXPERIENCE	CFAD2: SCHOOL SIZE

OUTCOME: Greater systemic understanding of the variations across schools for differentiated parental engagement strategies required for schools serving this age group for collaborative work of increasing student outcomes.

Appendix A continued

Examining Middle School Parental Engagement: Conceptual Map for Academic Socialization (AS)

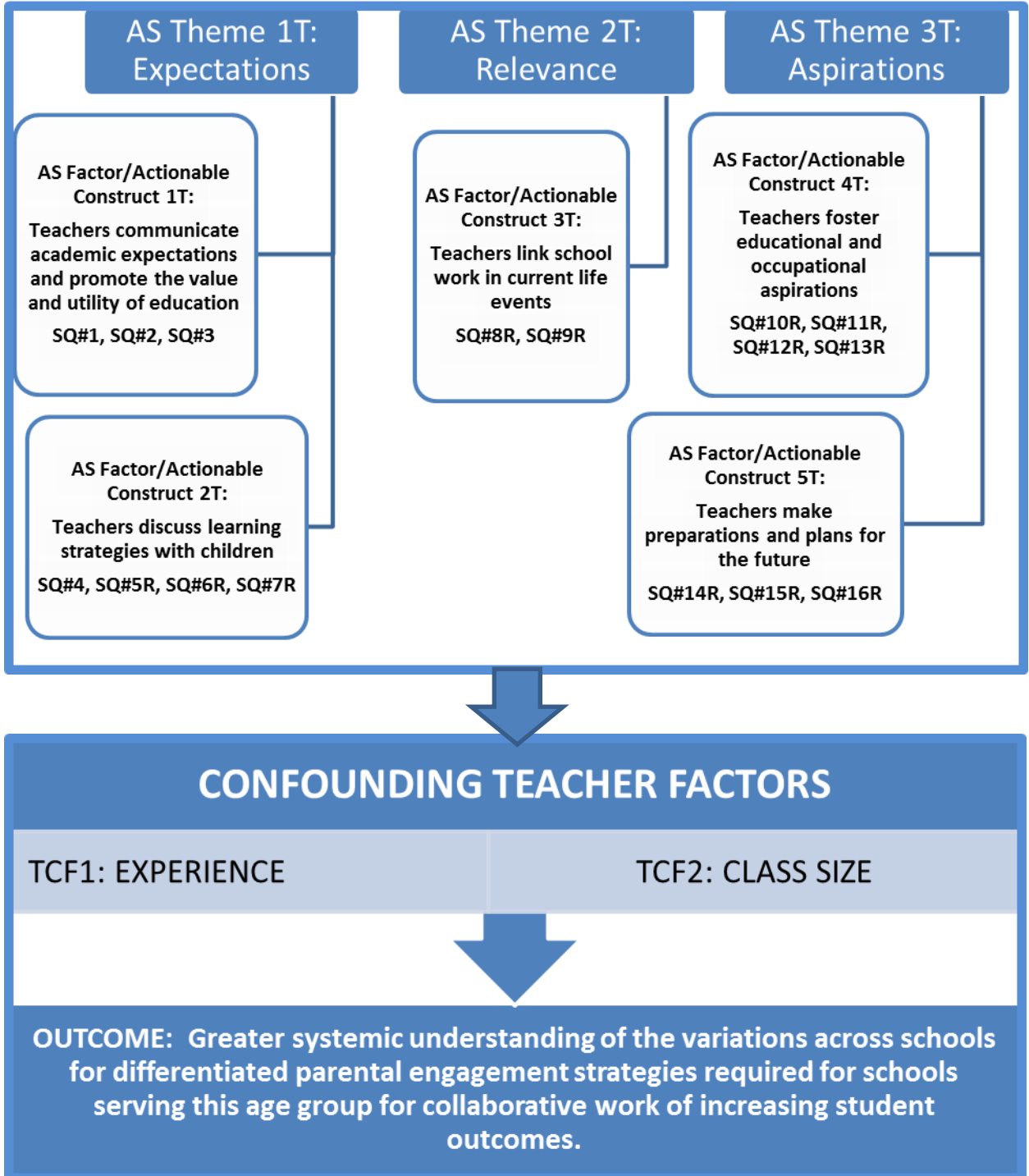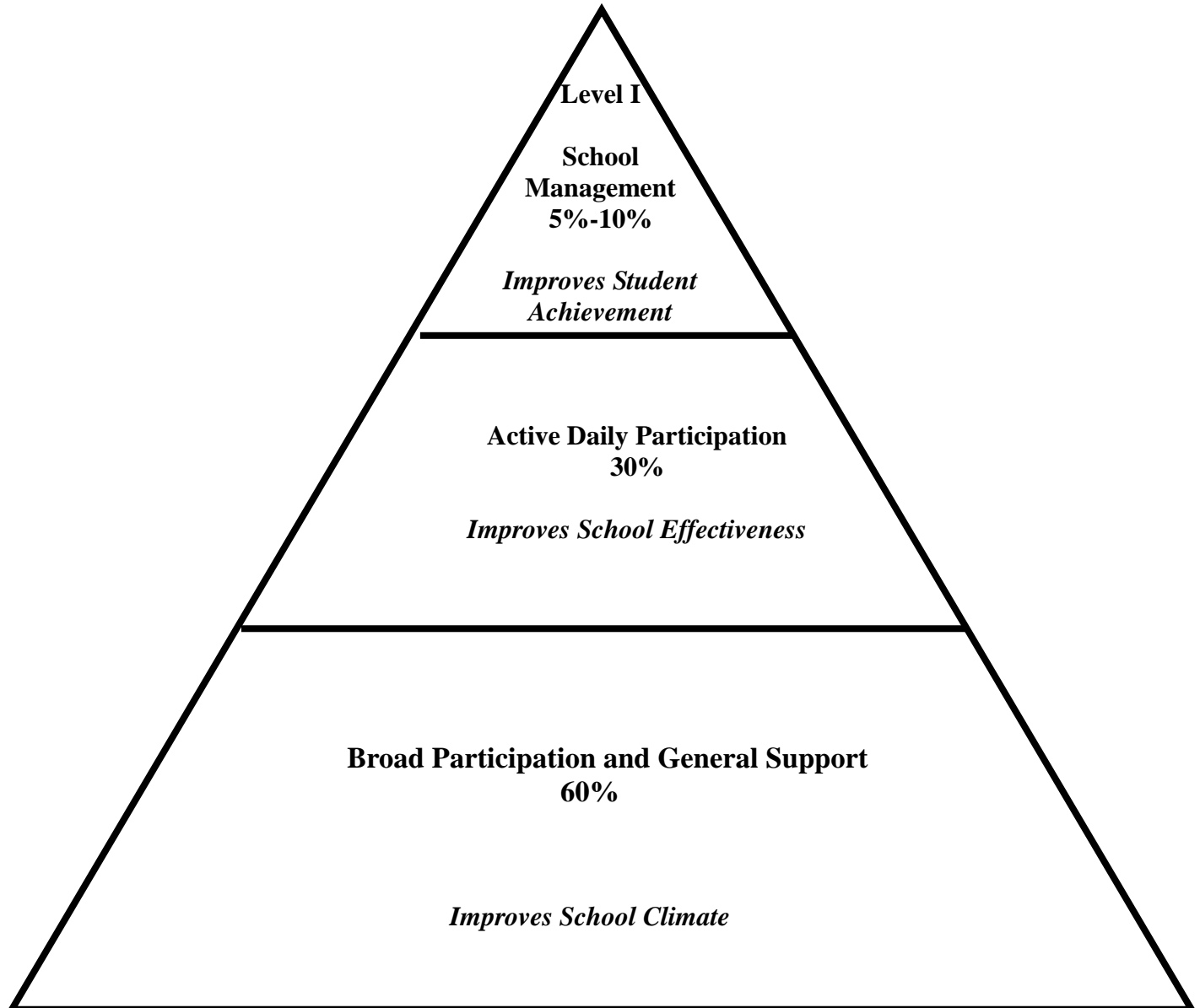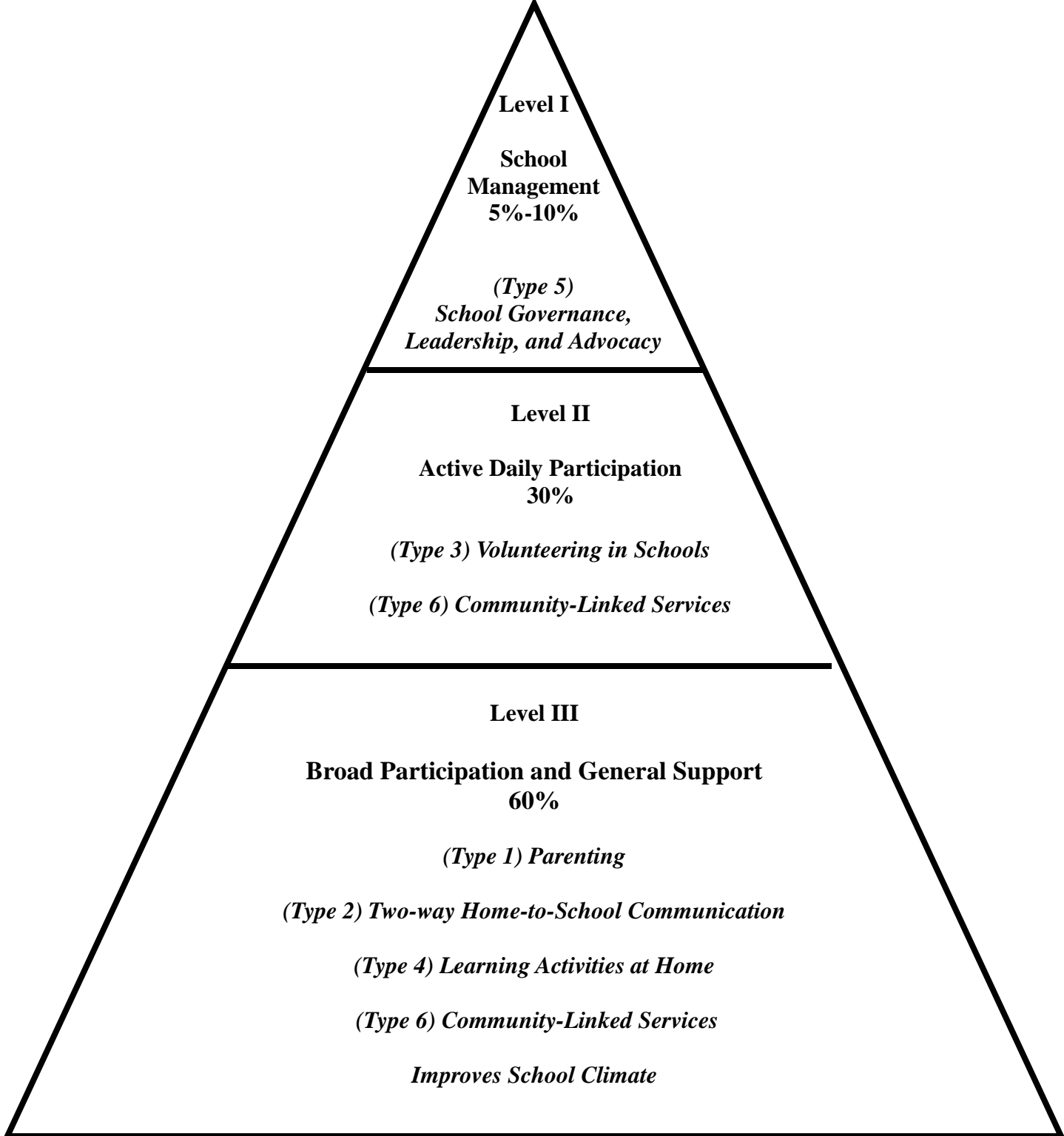**Key: P =Parent; AD =Administrator; T =Teacher; SQ =Survey Question; R =Recoded**

AS Theme 1T: Expectations	AS Theme 2T: Relevance	AS Theme 3T: Aspirations
AS Factor/Actionable Construct 1T: Teachers communicate academic expectations and promote the value and utility of education SQ#1, SQ#2, SQ#3	**AS Factor/Actionable Construct 3T:** Teachers link school work in current life events SQ#8R, SQ#9R	**AS Factor/Actionable Construct 4T:** Teachers foster educational and occupational aspirations SQ#10R, SQ#11R, SQ#12R, SQ#13R
AS Factor/Actionable Construct 2T: Teachers discuss learning strategies with children SQ#4, SQ#5R, SQ#6R, SQ#7R		**AS Factor/Actionable Construct 5T:** Teachers make preparations and plans for the future SQ#14R, SQ#15R, SQ#16R

CONFOUNDING TEACHER FACTORS

TCF1: EXPERIENCE	TCF2: CLASS SIZE

OUTCOME: Greater systemic understanding of the variations across schools for differentiated parental engagement strategies required for schools serving this age group for collaborative work of increasing student outcomes.

Appendix B: Comer SDP Model

Comer School Development Program's
Three Levels of Parent Involvement in Education (1968)

Level I

**School
Management
5%-10%**

*Improves Student
Achievement*

**Active Daily Participation
30%**

Improves School Effectiveness

**Broad Participation and General Support
60%**

Improves School Climate

Appendix C: Comer and Epstein Models Combined by Study District
The Study District's Combination of the Comer School Development Program's Three
Levels of Parent Involvement in Education and the National Network of Partnership
Schools' Six Types of Involvement (Jackson, 2000)

Level I

**School
Management
5%-10%**

(Type 5)
School Governance,
Leadership, and Advocacy

Level II

**Active Daily Participation
30%**

(Type 3) Volunteering in Schools

(Type 6) Community-Linked Services

Level III

**Broad Participation and General Support
60%**

(Type 1) Parenting

(Type 2) Two-way Home-to-School Communication

(Type 4) Learning Activities at Home

(Type 6) Community-Linked Services

Improves School Climate

Appendix D: Parent Consent to Participate in Research Embedded in Qualtrics Survey

Project Title	AN EXAMINATION OF PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT DURING THE MIDDLE SCHOOL YEARS
Purpose of the Study	This research is being conducted by Sheila Jackson at the University of Maryland, College Park under the direction of Dr. Margaret J. McLaughlin. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are a parent/guardian of eighth grade students in THE STUDY DISTRICT. The purpose of this research project is to identify and understand parental engagement practices at the middle school level from your perspective. Your participation will help to provide a better understanding of what actions schools and parents take to promote parental engagement that supports the middle school student.
Procedures	You are being asked to take this short survey that will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. The survey will ask several questions about your activities as a parent engaged in implementing strategies to encourage parental engagement in support of eight grade students' academic success and appropriate psycho-social development.
Potential Risks and Discomforts	There are no known risks if you choose to participate. Potential discomfort could arise from interpretation of questions as worded by the researcher or concerns about confidentiality of responses. Your responses will not be known to anyone other than the researcher.
Potential Benefits	There are no direct benefits to you from participating in this survey. However, the findings of study will be important to THE STUDY DISTRICT as they will be used to improve our district wide efforts for increasing effective parental engagement at the middle school level.
Incentive	Upon your submission of this completed survey, you will be directed to a link that will enter the email address that you provide into a raffle drawing for a $50.00 cash award for a parent from your school! Your email address will not be associated with your survey responses. Additionally, for participation in this survey, your school will receive the latest and greatest approved free software worth $320 for middle school Parent and Family Engagement Strategies for use in providing school site meetings and workshops for increasing parent and family engagement based upon participation at the following levels: 100% of administrators (3: Principal, AP, and Counselor); 80% of eighth grade teachers; and 30% of eighth grade parents!
Confidentiality	Your responses to the questions will be combined with those of other eighth grade parents/guardians and at no time will any of your individual information or responses be disclosed. All of the responses will be stored in a HIPPA-compliant, Qualtrics secure database that only Mrs. Jackson and a statistician will be able to access until the data have been deleted.
Right to Withdraw and Questions	Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate at any point. If you have questions regarding the study, you may contact Sheila Jackson at sjackso6@umd.edu. If you have questions you do not feel comfortable asking the researcher, you may contact Dr. Margaret McLaughlin at mjm@umd.edu.
Statement of Consent	I have read, understood, and printed a copy of the above consent form and

	desire of my own free will to participate in this study.
	Checking "YES" below will serve as your electronic signature for participation.
	Checking "NO" below will exit the survey.

Appendix D continued: Teacher and Administrator Consent to Participate in Research Embedded in Qualtrics Survey

Project Title	AN EXAMINATION OF PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT DURING THE MIDDLE SCHOOL YEARS
Purpose of the Study	This research is being conducted by Sheila Jackson at the University of Maryland, College Park under the direction of Dr. Margaret J. McLaughlin. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are a teacher who provides direct instruction {or "because you are an administrator (principal, assistant principal or professional school counselor"} for eighth grade students in THE STUDY DISTRICT. The purpose of this research project is to identify and understand parental engagement practices at the middle school level from your perspective. Your participation will help to provide a better understanding of what actions schools and parents take to promote parental engagement that supports the middle school student.
Procedures	You are being asked to take this short survey that will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. The survey will ask several questions about your activities as a parent engaged in implementing strategies to encourage parental engagement in support of eight grade students' academic success and appropriate psycho-social development.
Potential Risks and Discomforts	There are no known risks if you choose to participate. Potential discomfort could arise from interpretation of questions as worded by the researcher or concerns about confidentiality of responses. Your responses will not be known to anyone other than the researcher.
Potential Benefits	There are no direct benefits to you from participating in this survey. However, the findings of study will be important to THE STUDY DISTRICT as they will be used to improve our district wide efforts for increasing effective parental engagement at the middle school level.
Incentive	Your school will receive the latest and greatest approved free software worth $320 for middle school Parent and Family Engagement Strategies for your use in providing school site meetings and workshops for increasing parent and family engagement based upon participation at the following levels: 100% of administrators (3: Principal, AP, and Counselor); 80% of eighth grade teachers; and 30% of 8th grade parents with emails.
Confidentiality	Your responses to the questions will be combined with those of other eighth grade teachers and at no time will any of your individual information or responses be disclosed. All of the responses will be stored in a HIPPA-compliant, Qualtrics secure database that only Mrs. Jackson and a statistician will be able to access until the data have been deleted.
Right to Withdraw and Questions	Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate at any point. If you have questions regarding the study, you may contact Sheila Jackson at sjackso6@umd.edu. If you have questions you do not feel comfortable asking the researcher, you may contact Dr. Margaret McLaughlin at mjm@umd.edu.
Statement of Consent	I have read, understood, and printed a copy of the above consent form and desire of my own free will to participate in this study. Checking "YES" below will serve as your electronic signature for

	participation. Checking "NO" below will exit the survey.

Appendix E: Institutional Review Board Approval by the Study District

PGCPS
Great By Choice

Kola K. Sunmonu, Ph.D.
Director of Research & Evaluation

August 25, 2015

Mrs. Sheila M. Jackson
12610 Pleasant Prospect Road
Mitchellville, MD 20746

Dear Mrs. Jackson:

Your application to conduct the research titled "*An Examination of Parental Engagement During the Middle School Years*" has been reviewed by the Prince George's County Public Schools' research application reviewers. Based on the examination, I am pleased to inform you that the Department of Testing, Research & Evaluation has granted conditional authorization for you to proceed with your study.

Authorization for this research extends through the 2015-2016 school year only. In order to collect data during subsequent school years, you must submit a written request for an extension and that request must be approved. Request for extension must be accompanied with a status report of the study. The district reserves the right to withdraw approval at any time or decline to extend the approval if the implementation of your study adversely impacts any of the school district's activities.

If the conditions summarized above are acceptable to you, please secure written approval of the principal of each school where you plan to conduct your research. The attached Principal Permission to Conduct Research Study form should be reproduced for principals to sign. The original signed copies of this form should be forwarded to my attention and a copy given to the respective principal. Regarding the Informed Consent forms and other recruitment documents, only approved copies can be distributed to your target subjects. Should you revise any of these documents, the revised documents must be approved by this office before being distributed. It is important that the procedure detailed in the proposal submitted should be followed while conducting your research.
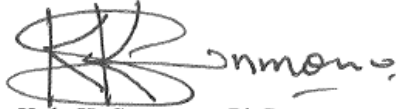
PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS * Department of Testing Research & Evaluation
1616 Owens Road || Ste. 19 || Oxon Hill, MD 20745   Phone: 301-780-6807   Website: www.PGCPS.org

90

An abstract and one copy of the final report should be forwarded to the Department of Testing, Research & Evaluation within one month of successful defense of your dissertation. Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. I can be reached at 301-780-6807 or by email, kolawole.sunmonu@pgcps.org. I wish you success in your study.

Sincerely,

Kola K. Sunmonu, Ph.D.
Director of Research & Evaluation

KKS:kks
Enclosures
cc: Yakoubou Ousmanou, Executive Director of Testing, Research, and Evaluation

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DEPARTMENT OF TESTING, RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

DIVISION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

<u>Principal Permission to Conduct Research Study[1]</u>

Do not write in this box – DTRE use only

<u>August 25, 2015</u>   <u>June 30, 2016</u>   <u>DRE-RA-1415075</u>

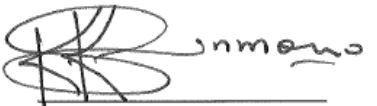Authorization Date   Authorization Expiration Date   DTRE Application Number

<u>Mrs. Sheila M. Jackson</u>   has received conditional authorization from the Department of Research and Evaluation to conduct the following research study:

<u>*"An Examination of Parental Engagement During the Middle School Years"*</u>

_____

_____

in Prince George's County Public Schools. The researcher would like to conduct the study in:

_____

School

Implementation of this study is contingent upon the researcher securing the **permission** of the principal in each of the above-listed schools in which the study will be conducted.

_____

DTRE Staff Signature

_____ Approved   _____ Disapproved

Remarks:

_____   _____   _____

Principal Name   Signature   Date

Should you have any question or concerns about this matter, please call Dr. Kola K. Sunmonu at (301) 780-6807 **before** granting permission.

---

1   The researcher is responsible for returning the original signed copy of this form to the Department of Testing Research and Evaluation, 1616 Owens Road, Room 19, Oxon Hill, MD 20745.

Appendix F: Institutional Review Board Approval by the University of Maryland

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

DATE:	April 24, 2015
TO:	Sheila Jackson, Ed.D.
FROM:	University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB
PROJECT TITLE:	[722978-1] An Examination of Parental Engagement in Middle Schools
REFERENCE #:	
SUBMISSION TYPE:	New Project
ACTION:	APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE:	April 24, 2015
EXPIRATION DATE:	April 23, 2016
REVIEW TYPE:	Expedited Review
REVIEW CATEGORY:	Expedited review category # 7

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Prior to submission to the IRB Office, this project received scientific review from the departmental IRB Liaison.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulations.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of April 23, 2016.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Unless a consent waiver or alteration has been approved, Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others (UPIRSOs) and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of seven years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office at 301-405-4212 or irb@umd.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB's records.

Appendix G: IRB Amendment Approvals by the University of Maryland

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

1204 Marie Mount Hall
College Park, MD 20742-5125
TEL 301.405.4212
FAX 301.314.1475
irb@umd.edu
www.umresearch.umd.edu/IRB

DATE: June 10, 2015

TO: Sheila Jackson, Ed.D.
FROM: University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [722978-2] An Examination of Parental Engagement in Middle Schools
REFERENCE #:
SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: June 10, 2015
EXPIRATION DATE: April 23, 2016
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 7

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Prior to submission to the IRB Office, this project received scientific review from the departmental IRB Liaison.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulations.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of April 23, 2016.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Unless a consent waiver or alteration has been approved, Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others (UPIRSOs) and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

Generated on IRBNet

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

DATE: August 18, 2015

TO: Sheila Jackson, Ed.D.
FROM: University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [722978-3] An Examination of Parental Engagement in Middle Schools
REFERENCE #:
SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: August 18, 2015
EXPIRATION DATE: April 23, 2016
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 7

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Prior to submission to the IRB Office, this project received scientific review from the departmental IRB Liaison.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulations.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of April 23, 2016.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Unless a consent waiver or alteration has been approved, Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others (UPIRSOs) and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

- 1 -

Generated on IRBNet

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of seven years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office at 301-405-4212 or irb@umd.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB's records.

Appendix H: Study District Schools with Grade 6-8 Middle School Students 2014-15

Study District 6-8 Middle Schools	Total Student Enrollment	Eighth Grade Student Enrollment
1. MS I	629	226
2. MS II	832	290
3. MS III	1,085	393
4. MS IV	985	430
5. MS V	378	125
6. MS VI	662	343
7. MS VII	905	331
8. MS VIII	658	324
9. MS IX	1,166	409
10. MS X	563	194
11. MS XI	818	289
12. MS XII	494	218
13. MS XIII	740	266
14. MS XIV	535	196
15. MS XV	669	249
16. MS XVI	868	330
17. MS XVII	859	285
18. MS XVIII	669	257
19. MS XIX	1,000	339
20. MS XX	600	280
21. MS XXI	743	302
22. MS XXII	1,013	401

Appendix I: Survey/Questionnaire Instruments

Parent, Teacher, and Administrator Surveys similarly contain the following introductory statements:

A.   1) Specific Stakeholder Attestations

2) Introduction: "In this survey, we are interested in learning about your thoughts, feelings, and attitudes towards parental engagement in your middle school as {an administrator, teacher or parent} for eighth grade students. This survey is to help us understand different aspects of the parent/school relationship. When answering these questions, please consider your current experience at school in your role {as a parent} {working with eighth grade students and their families}. Please think about your average experiences with eighth graders over the past academic year. Your answers will be used in aggregate, and I will not be evaluating individual responses. As such, please be as honest as possible - there are no right or wrong answers. The answer choices will be: Don't Know (1) ∙ Twice a Year (2) ∙ Quarterly (3) ∙ Monthly (4) ∙ 2-3 Times a Month (5) ∙ Weekly (6) ∙ 2-3 Times a Week (7) ∙ Daily (8)

The time frame for completion of this survey is approximately 15 minutes. Thank you so very much for your participation!

3) All participants identified their school and various attestations defined in each survey that follows.

Section I**:** 19 Survey Questions (16 applying the scoring rubric; 2 with multiple selections; and 1 allowing for text response for additional information regarding engagement actions). Each survey consists of the same questions altered to reflect each stakeholder's perspective and role alignment regarding actionable constructs for academic socialization.

Section 2: 9-10 Participant Demographic Questions differentiated by role to gather information that will inform possible confounding factors for survey participants.

Appendix I. continued:
8th Grade Parent Survey: AN EXAMINATION OF PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT
DURING THE MIDDLE SCHOOL YEARS
Survey Adapted from The Harvard Graduate School of Education Certified Parental
Engagement Survey for Parents (2013); The National Network of Partnership
Schools/Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory School Parent Involvement Survey
for Teachers (2009); and The NCES Survey on Family and School Partnerships in Public
Schools K–8 (1998)

Introduction

Attestations:
    1) Please attest that your child attended a middle school in this STUDY
    DISTRICT in the previous school year.
    If "YES" the survey will continue; if "NO" the survey will close;

    2)   Identify your child's school

    3)   Identify the gender of your eighth grade student

Section 1: Survey Questions:

Q1. How often do you meet in person with teachers of your eighth grade student to
      discuss academic expectations?

Q2. How often do you discuss and reinforce academic expectations with your child?

Q3. How often do you discuss the importance, values and utility of education with your
      child?

Q4. How often do you work to develop and maintain home conditions or environments
      that support learning?

Q5. Check every action that you take to develop and maintain home conditions or
      environments that support learning: ⋅ Limit television ⋅ Curtail phone use/texting
      ⋅ Limit computer and internet use for activities other than homework ⋅ Ensure
      eight hours of sleep ⋅ Provide healthy meals and snacks ⋅ Limit friend visitations
      during the school week ⋅ Create structured play and interaction with other
      children ⋅ Establish an equipped and distraction free area for studying and
      homework ⋅ Allow student to set homework and study hours ⋅ Monitor, discuss
      and review school work and homework ⋅ Provide age appropriate reading and
      resource materials

Q6. How often do you monitor, discuss and extend schoolwork at home and in the
      community for your child?

Q7. How often do you assist your child with mastering skills they need to improve?

Q8. How often do you promote your child's participation in learning activities outside of school?

Q9. How often do you link your child's school work to current life events?

Q10. How often do you utilize community resources, such as businesses, libraries, parks and museums to extend your child's learning environment?

Q11. How often do you discuss College/University opportunities to support your child's development of educational aspirations?

Q12. How far would you like for your child to progress in education: · Finish middle school · Attend high school · Graduate from high school · Attend technical or trade school · Attend some college · Graduate from college · Obtain a master's degree · Obtain a doctorate

Q13. How often do you discuss careers or expose your children to career opportunities to support development of occupational aspirations?

Q14. How often do you participate in Career Day at your child's school?

Q15. How often do you discuss your educational and occupational information to support development of your child's educational and occupational aspirations?

Q16. How often do you work on preparing your child for the next academic year?

Q17. How often do you stress the importance of your child doing things for themselves?

Q18. How often do you give your child the opportunity to lead self-determined projects in order to help them learn how to work collaboratively with others?

Q19. In what other ways are you engaged in your child's school during this eighth grade year?

Section 2: Demographic Survey Questions:

Q20. What is your gender?

Q21. Which race/ethnicity best describes you? · American Indian or Alaskan Native (1) · Asian/Pacific Islander (2) · Black or African American (3) · Latin American or Hispanic (4) · White/Caucasian (5) · Multiple Ethnicity/Other (please identify) (6) _____

Q22. In what decade were you born? · 1990-2000 (1) · 1980-1990 (2) · 1970-1980 (3) · 1960-1970 (4) · Before 1960 (5)

Q23. What was the primary language spoken in your childhood home? (Please choose only one.) · Chinese (1) · English (2) · French (3) · German (4) · Italian (5) · Korean (6) · Russian (7) · Spanish (8) · Tagalog (9) · Vietnamese (10) · Other/multiple languages (please specify) (11) _____

Q24. What is the primary language spoken in your current home? (Please choose only one.) · Chinese (1) · English (2) · French (3) · German (4) · Italian (5) · Korean (6) · Russian (7) · Spanish (8) · Tagalog (9) · Vietnamese (10) · Other/multiple languages (please specify) (11) _____

Q25. What is the highest level of education you have completed? · Undergraduate/Bachelor's Degree (1) · Master's Degree (2) · Educational Specialist (3) · Educational Doctorate (4) · Other Doctorate (5)

Q26. What is your approximate average household income? · $0-$24,999 · $25,000 - $49,999 · $50,000 – 74,999 · $75,000-$99,999 · $100,000-$124,999 · $125,000-$149,999 · $150,000-$174,999 · $175,000-$199,999 · Prefer Not to Answer

Q27. Including your eighth student, how many children (ages birth-18) live in your home?

Q28. What additional comments, questions, or concerns do you have about this survey?

Appendix I. continued
8th Grade Teacher Survey: AN EXAMINATION OF PARENTAL
ENGAGEMENT DURING THE MIDDLE SCHOOL YEARS
Survey Adapted from The Harvard Graduate School of Education Certified Parental
Engagement Survey for Parents (2013); The National Network of Partnership
Schools/Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory School Parent Involvement Survey
for Teachers (2009); and The NCES Survey on Family and School Partnerships in Public
Schools K–8 (1998)

Introduction

Attestations
    1) Pre-Consent: "Dear Eighth Grade Teacher, If you do not provide direct
instruction to eighth graders this year, please click here."
    If "I do not provide direct ins... Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

    2) Identify your school

Section 1: Survey Questions:

Q1 How often do you meet in person with parents of your eighth grade students to
    discuss academic expectations?

Q2 How often do you discuss and reinforce academic expectations with eighth grade
    students?

Q3 How often do you discuss the importance, values and utility of education with eighth
    grade students?

Q4 How often do you provide parents and families with information/training on
    developing home conditions or environments that support learning?

Q5 Check every action that you encourage parents to take to develop and maintain home
    conditions or environments that support learning: ⋅ Limit television ⋅ Curtail
    phone use/texting ⋅ Limit computer and internet use for activities other than
    homework ⋅ Ensure eight hours of sleep ⋅ Provide healthy meals and snacks ⋅
    Limit friend visitations during the school week ⋅ Create structured play and
    interaction with other children ⋅Establish an equipped and distraction free area for
    studying and homework ⋅ Allow student to set homework and study hours ⋅
    Monitor, discuss and review school work and homework ⋅ Provide age
    appropriate reading and resource materials

Q6 How often do you provide information to families on how to monitor, discuss and
    apply schoolwork at home and in the community?

Q7 How often do you provide ongoing and specific information to parents on how to assist students with mastering academic and social skills they need to improve?

Q8 How often do you promote student participation in learning activities outside of school?

Q9 How often do you link students' school work to current life events?

Q10 How often do you utilize community resources, such as businesses, libraries, parks and museums to enhance the learning environment?

Q11 How often do you incorporate College/University Day or discussions to support student development of educational aspirations?

Q12 How far in school do you encourage your students to go academically? ᐧ Finish middle school ᐧ Attend high school ᐧ Graduate from high school ᐧ Attend technical or trade school ᐧ Attend some college ᐧ Graduate from college ᐧ Obtain a master's degree ᐧ Obtain a doctorate

Q13 How often do you incorporate Career Day activities to support student development of occupational aspirations?

Q14 How often do you engage parents in visiting the school to share their educational and occupational information to enhance the learning environment?

Q15 How often do you discuss your own educational and occupational history to support development of your students' educational and occupational aspirations?

Q16 How often do you provide parents and families with information/training on preparing their children for the next academic year?

Q17 How often do you give your students the opportunity to lead self-determined projects in order to help them learn how to work collaboratively with others?

Q18 How often do you stress the importance of students doing things for themselves with your eighth grade parents?

Q19 Please list other specific ways in which you engage eighth grade parents in your school.

Section 2: Demographic Survey Questions:

Q20 What is your gender?

Q21 Which race/ethnicity best describes you? ᐧ American Indian or Alaskan Native (1) ᐧ Asian/Pacific Islander (2) ᐧ Black or African American (3) ᐧ Latin American or

Hispanic (4) · White/Caucasian (5) · Multiple Ethnicity/Other (please identify) (6)
_____

Q22 In what decade were you born? · 1990-2000 (1) · 1980 -1990 (2) · 1970-1980 (3) · 1960-1970 (4) · Before 1960 (5)

Q23 What was the primary language spoken in your childhood home? (Please choose only one.) · Chinese (1) · English (2) · French (3) · German (4) · Italian (5) · Korean (6) · Russian (7) · Spanish (8) · Tagalog (9) ·Vietnamese (10) · Other/multiple languages (please specify) (11) _____

Q24 What is the primary language spoken in your current home? (Please choose only one.) · Chinese (1) · English (2) · French (3) · German (4) · Italian (5) · Korean (6) · Russian (7) · Spanish (8) · Tagalog (9) ·Vietnamese (10) · Other/multiple languages (please specify) (11) _____

Q25 What is the highest level of education you have completed?
· Undergraduate/Bachelor's Degree (1) · Master's Degree (2) · Educational Specialist (3) · Educational Doctorate (4) · Other Doctorate (5)

Q26 How many years of experience have you had as an eighth grade teacher: 2 or less (1) · 5 or less (2) · 10 or less (3) · 15 or less (4) · 20 or less (5) · More than 20 (6)

Q27 Are you currently or have you ever been the parent of an eighth grade student? · YES (1) · NO (2)

Q28 With how many eighth grade students do you interact on a daily basis?

Q29 What additional comments, questions or concerns do you have about this survey?

Appendix I. continued

8th Grade Administrator Survey: AN EXAMINATION OF PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT DURING THE MIDDLE SCHOOL YEARS
Survey Adapted from The Harvard Graduate School of Education Certified Parental Engagement Survey for Parents (2013); The National Network of Partnership Schools/Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory School Parent Involvement Survey for Teachers (2009); and The NCES Survey on Family and School Partnerships in Public Schools K–8 (1998)

Introduction

Attestations:
1) Please attest that you serve and ADMINISTRATOR (as either a principal, assistant principal or professional school counselor) by clicking "Yes" below ⸱ YES I am an ADMINISTRATOR (1) ⸱ NO (2)
If NO Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

2) Identify your school

Section 1: Survey Questions:

Q1 How often do you or another administrator in your school meet in person with parents of your eighth grade students to discuss academic expectations?

Q2 How often do you or another administrator in your school discuss and reinforce academic expectations with eighth grade students?

Q3 How often do you or another administrator in your school discuss the importance, values and utility of education with eighth grade students?

Q4 How often do you or another administrator in your school provide parents and families with information/training on developing home conditions or environments that support learning?

Q5 Check every action that you or another administrator in your school encourage parents to take to develop and maintain home conditions or environments that support learning: ⸱ Limit television ⸱ Curtail phone use/texting ⸱ Limit computer and internet use for activities other than homework ⸱ Ensure eight hours of sleep ⸱ Provide healthy meals and snacks ⸱ Limit friend visitations during the school week ⸱ Create structured play and interaction with other children ⸱Establish an equipped and distraction free area for studying and homework ⸱ Allow student to set homework and study hours ⸱ Monitor, discuss and review school work and homework ⸱ Provide age appropriate reading and resource materials.

Q6 How often do you or another administrator in your school provide information to families on how to monitor, discuss, and apply schoolwork at home and in the community?

Q7 How often do you or another administrator in your school provide ongoing and specific information to parents on how to assist students with mastering academic and social skills they need to improve?

Q8 How often do you or another administrator in your school promote student participation in learning activities outside of school?

Q9 How often do you or another administrator in your school link students' school work to current life events?

Q10 How often do you or another administrator in your school utilize community resources, such as businesses, libraries, parks, and museums to enhance the learning environment?

Q11 How often do you or another administrator in your school incorporate College/University Day or discussions to support student development of educational aspirations?

Q12 How far in school do you or another administrator in your school encourage your students to go academically? • Finish middle school • Attend high school • Graduate from high school • Attend technical or trade school • Attend some college • Graduate from college • Obtain a master's degree • Obtain a doctorate

Q13 How often do you or another administrator in your school incorporate Career Day activities to support student development of occupational aspirations?

Q14 How often do you or another administrator in your school engage parents in visiting the school to share their educational and occupational information to enhance the learning environment?

Q15 How often do you or another administrator in your school discuss your own educational and occupational history to support development of your students' educational and occupational aspirations?

Q16 How often do you or another administrator in your school provide parents and families with information/training on preparing their children for the next academic year?

Q17 How often do you or another administrator in your school stress the importance of students doing things for themselves with your eighth grade parents?

Q18 How often do you or another administrator in your school give your students the opportunity to lead self-determined projects in order to help them learn how to work collaboratively with others?

Q19 Please list other specific ways in which you or another administrator in your school engage eighth grade parents in your school.

Section 2: Demographic Survey Questions:

Q20 What is your gender?

Q21 Which race/ethnicity best describes you? · American Indian or Alaskan Native (1) · Asian/Pacific Islander (2) · Black or African American (3) · Latin American or Hispanic (4) · White/Caucasian (5) · Multiple Ethnicity/Other (please identify) (6) _____

Q22 In what decade were you born? · 1990-2000 (1) · 1980-1990 (2) · 1970-1980 (3) · 1960-1970 (4) · Before 1960 (5)

Q23 What was the primary language spoken in your childhood home? (Please choose only one.) · Chinese (1) · English (2) · French (3) · German (4) · Italian (5) · Korean (6) · Russian (7) · Spanish (8) · Tagalog (9) · Vietnamese (10) · Other/multiple languages (please specify) (11) _____

Q24 What is the primary language spoken in your current home? (Please choose only one.) · Chinese (1) · English (2) · French (3) · German (4) · Italian (5) · Korean (6) · Russian (7) · Spanish (8) · Tagalog (9) · Vietnamese (10) · Other/multiple languages (please specify) (11) _____

Q25 What is the highest level of education you have completed?
· Undergraduate/Bachelor's Degree (1) · Master's Degree (2) · Educational Specialist (3) · Educational Doctorate (4) · Other Doctorate (5)

Q26 How many years of experience have you had as an eighth grade teacher: 2 or less (1) · 5 or less (2) · 10 or less (3) · 15 or less (4) · 20 or less (5) · More than 20 (6)

Q27 Are you currently or have you ever been the parent of an eighth grade student?
· YES (1) · NO (2)

Q28 With how many eighth grade students do you interact on a daily basis?

Q29 What additional comments, questions or concerns do you have about this survey?

Glossary

Stakeholders

Glossary Term	Glossary Definition
PARENT	Primary care-giver and legal guardian for children attending school.
TEACHER	Professionally certified classroom instructor charged with providing educational content and knowledge to students under his/her supervision during the school day.
PRINCIPAL	Professionally certified educator assigned by a school district as the lead supervisory administrator in a particular school building.
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL	Professional educator assigned by a school district to assist and support the lead supervisory administrator in a particular school building.
PROFEESIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELOR	Professional educator assigned to a specific school to provide student counseling and guidance services for effective psycho-social development in support of academic performance
SCHOOL COMMUNITY	A group of individuals connected to one particular school who inhabit some sense of similarity together and who identify themselves as such. This concept can evolve through some common geography, interest, experience, network, occupation, and so on.

District School Configurations and Demographic Terms

Glossary Term	Glossary Definition
MIDDLE SCHOOL	In the study district, a middle school consists of any sequential grades from 6 through 8. A successful middle school has "a clearly stated mission; a safe climate for learning; high expectations for all students, teachers, administrators, and parents/families; high student time on task; administrators who are instructional leaders; frequent monitoring of student progress; and positive home-school relations" (The Study District Master Plan, 2012).
ACADEMY	In the study district, an academy is a school configured to sequentially house grades PreK-8 or PreK-10. Academies typically have an embedded specialty program focus (The Study District Master Plan, 2012).
CHARTER SCHOOL	In the study district, public charter schools are established upon the Board of Education's approval of applications submitted by outside private entities wishing to establish and run specifically

	differentiated academic programs.
RURAL	For the purposes of this study the following criteria were used to determine whether portions of the study district could be considered "rural." • Most people live outside of developments larger than 1,000 people. • Most people live outside the commuting zone of larger centers (larger than 10,000 people). • Most people live in areas where there are fewer than 150 people per sq. km. (OECD criterion). • More than 50% of people live in rurally designated areas within the region. • There are no urban centers with 50,000 people or more in the region (DuPlessis, et al, 2001).
SUBURBAN	Regions where one quarter of the criteria listed in "rural" do not apply.
URBAN	Regions where at least half of the criteria listed in "rural" do not apply.
STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS	• FARM = Free and Reduced Meal Students – identified as such based upon the family's socioeconomic status that places them below the Poverty level • AA = African American Students • L = Latino Students • W = Caucasian/White Students • O = Other

Theoretical Frameworks for Parent Engagement

Glossary Term	*Glossary Definition*
PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT	Throughout the last past decade, "parent involvement" evolved into *family involvement* or *parent or family engagement* and is used interchangeably within literature. In the Study District, parent, family and community engagement is defined as "shared responsibility and effective collaboration between the school system and its parents, families, and communities toward developing outstanding

	academic achievement for all of our diverse student populations."
ACADEMIC SOCIALIZATION	A family's ability to communicate academic expectations and foster educational and occupational aspirations – this family engagement strategy has been proven by research as the most effective educational intervention and support system during the child's college access middle- and high school years (Harvard Family Research Project, 2012).
ACTIONABLE CONSTRUCTS	Observable actions related to a specific conceptual model or schematic idea. Used interchangeably with "factors" and "behaviors."
CONFOUNDING FACTOR	A relationship between two causal factors such that their individual contributions cannot be separated.
CODIFICATION	Identifying part of larger theme into smaller parts and turning these aspects into problems to be resolved. These are usually daily representations presented in some visual manner.
DECODIFICATION	This is the pulling apart or teasing open a codification to look at the various influences that support the part of a generative theme being examined. Also, as more codifications are identified, decodification interprets how the relationships among parts of the theme work together.
GENERATIVE THEMES	Generative themes are complex codifications that are broad in scope and usually identify big issues.

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