

PARENT ENGAGEMENT IN AFRICAN AMERICAN
COMMUNITIES: PRE-COVID AND PERI-COVID
PERSPECTIVE OF SCHOOL EFFORTS

by

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THESIS

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my loving husband for his patience, constant prayers, support, encouragement, and always being a listening ear. I would not have been able to do this without you! Second, to my mother and my little sister for your love and being my main motivators. Third, to my extended family, friends, and church that supported me through this project. Lastly, to all the families and youth of Fort Worth that are counted out, you are who I did this for.

ABSTRACT

PARENT ENGAGEMENT IN AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES: PRE-COVID AND
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African American youth perform lower in main subjects and are suspended at higher rates compared to their peers. In Fort Worth ISD only three out of ten 3rd graders read on grade level, and 62% of African American female students and 52% of African American males are suspended. Parent engagement is a tool found to improve attendance, grades, and campus behavior leading to future college enrollment. However, campuses focus on a parent involvement approach that is reported to be ineffective for families of color as race, culture, socioeconomic status, and other factors can be disregarded. With the disparities found amongst African American youth in Fort Worth ISD, along with the change in learning due to COVID-19, this study sought to gain the perspectives of African American parents on Fort Worth ISD engagement efforts before and during COVID-19, and how transportation impacted parent engagement. Nine African American mothers were interviewed for this study. Results found that parent engagement perspectives were mixed before COVID and decreased during COVID. Parents also shared the importance of engagement and how schools can successfully engage them. Parents perspectives are needed to improve practices that will lead to long term academic success of their students. Recommendations for future practices included.

Keywords: parent engagement, African American parents, African American students

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Chapter One

Introduction

Quality education for youth has been a goal for families and educational systems for decades. Equal educational opportunities, especially for youth of color, have been fought for by many with the hopes of providing youth of color the same academic and career opportunities as their White peers. Despite efforts, educational equality is still an issue (Barajas-Lopez & Ishimaru, 2016), especially with the education of African American students (Fenton et. al, 2017; Marschall & Shah, 2020; Latunde & Clark-Louque, 2016; Yull, & Wilson, 2018). African American students continuously perform lower academically than their White peers in areas such as math and reading, producing fewer opportunities for gifted and talented programs and more special education placements (Marschall & Shah, 2020; Latunde & Clark-Louque, 2016). Regarding school discipline, African American students represent high numbers in suspension and expulsion rates up to three or more times their peers (Latunde & Clark-Louque, 2016; Yull & Wilson, 2018), with African American female students being suspended more often than other female students (Caldera, 2018; Fenton et al., 2017). Also, although African American students represent about 16% of the national school enrollment, 27% of students referred to law enforcement, and 31% of students arrested on school-related offenses are African American (Fenton et al., 2017). These challenges surround the educational issues and disparities amongst African American youth including achievement and discipline gaps, and school dropout (Caldera, 2018; Day & Dotterer, 2018; Fenton et al., 2017)

Due to years of research on educational disparities, educational policies and initiatives have been created to support the claim that parent engagement increases student success in school (D’Haem & Griswold, 2017; Fenton et al., 2017; Kraft, 2017; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013;

Marschall & Shah, 2020). Positive school and family relationships are found to benefit student's attendance, campus behavior, test scores, graduation rates, future college attendance, and overall future goals and aspirations. (Day & Dotterer, 2018; D'Haem & Griswold, 2017; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; Marschall & Shah, 2020). However, there is still a lack of successful school-parent relationships across the country, specifically in families of color, mostly among African American families (Latunde & Clark-Louque, 2016; Marschall & Shah, 2020; Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2020; Yull & Wilson, 2018). It has been assumed that the challenges facing African American students are present because African American families are uninvolved and uncaring towards their child(ren)'s education (Marschall & Shah, 2020; Latunde & Clark-Louque, 2016; Yull & Wilson, 2018). The personal, racial, cultural, and socioeconomic barriers that these parents are met with hinder their participation in school-centered activities (Barajas-Lopez & Ishimaru, 2016; Clifford & Göncü, 2019; D'Haem & Griswold, 2017; Marschall & Shah, 2020; Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2020). As a result, school personnel and staff form negative assumptions about their parenting, leading to damaged relationships. (Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2020; Yull & Wilson, 2018). African American parents highly value their children's education, and like other parents of color, their methods are "untapped" by educators as they do not meet school-centered assumptions such as volunteering or participation in parent-teacher association (PTA) that most commonly define parent participation (Barajas-Lopez & Ishimaru, 2016; Clifford & Göncü, 2019; Ishimaru, 2016; Latunde & Clark-Louque, 2016; Posey-Maddox, 2016). Numerous studies have shown that this constant focus on passive parental involvement strategies only silences the social and cultural capital parents of color have that is needed to help their children succeed (Barajas-Lopez & Ishimaru, 2016; Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2020; Theirs, 2017). Rather than focus on parental involvement methods, researchers suggest parent

engagement approaches that can allow educators to consider families' differences and embracing parents as partners with "funds of knowledge", allow for true engagement and educational success (Barajas-Lopez & Ishimaru, 2016; Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2020; Theirs, 2017).

Fort Worth Independent School District (FWISD) is the second largest district within the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex with more than 84,000 students enrolled. Out of the students enrolled, the majority are students of color with 63% Hispanic and 22% African American (*About Fort Worth ISD. (n.d.)*; Caldera, 2018). As indicated in the research, this district presents educational and discipline gaps among African American students. In 2016, FWISD announced the "100x25" initiative with the goal of 100% of third grade students reading on grade level by the year 2025 (Allen, 2021; Chavez, 2018). Over the years, literacy scores in the district have been the lowest in the state (Allen, 2020) with only 3 in 10 third graders reading on grade level (Chavez, 2018). In 2019, 25% of Black students in FWISD and 35% of students in the district overall read on grade level (Allen, 2021). Regarding discipline, in 2018, 55% of the 22% African American student population were suspended, with African American girls comprising 62% of the overall female suspension rate, and African American males comprising 52% of the male suspension rate (Caldera, 2018). These disparities may shed light on a parental engagement gap between African American and Caucasian parents which challenge efforts to combat disparities in schools. Also, along with the COVID-19 pandemic which has limited in person family-school interactions due to social distancing and distance learning (Swaby, 2020), there is a risk of this gap increasing which will lead to the continuation or increase of educational and behavioral disparities among African American youth.

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of African American parents' perspectives of Fort Worth Independent School District's (FWISD) family engagement strategies

and how strategies or, lack thereof, influence their child's academic success [pre-COVID]. The study will also gather parent perspectives of FWISD's current efforts to retain quality parent engagement amid the COVID-19 pandemic [peri-COVID]. Lastly, the study will explore how transportation influences parental engagement pre-COVID and peri-COVID.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Parental Engagement

Local, state, and federal standards for education reform have largely focused on student and teacher performance when in fact, school-parent relationships and parent engagement are also proven to increase academic and school success (Horsford & Holmes-Sutton, 2012; Kraft, 2017; D'Haem & Griswold, 2017; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Parent Engagement is defined as meaningful activities structured and shaped through interactions between school, family, and community in collaborative support of children's development and learning (Fenton et al., 2017; Horsford & Holmes-Sutton, 2012). Through the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), schools and educational organizations are given Title 1 funds to develop and implement plans to improve student academic performance by engaging parents of various races, socioeconomic statuses, and cultural backgrounds (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; Posey-Maddox, 2017; Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2020). Stepping away from traditional, school-centered approaches to gain parent participation, parent engagement efforts view parents as "funds of knowledge" when it comes to their children and seek their ideas and current practices (Barajas-Lopez & Ishimaru, 2016; Theirs, 2017). In this pursuit, parents are also encouraged to be advocates for the education of other children as well as instruments of change in the educational system and their communities

(Barajas-Lopez & Ishimaru, 2016; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). These efforts also provide a holistic view, allowing schools and community partners to assist in personal, familial, community, and systemic issues that produce current educational disparities in students (Lechuga-Pena & Brisson, 2018). Parent engagement strategies require change agents to be creative in meeting parents where they are, such as home visits or neighborhood and community outreach. In this way, schools can learn from families and develop trust that can increase effective engagement

Parent engagement programs on school campuses prove to be effective when there is a focus on building relationships with parents and interaction with the communities they serve. In her dual capacity framework piece, Karen Mapp (2013) discussed school campuses, districts, and programs that were improving their parent and family engagement efforts. For example, Stanton Elementary School in Washington, D.C. increased parental engagement and student achievement after implementing Parent-Teacher Home Visits, a project from Sacramento, California, and Academic Parent-Teacher Teams, a project from Creighton, Arizona. Both methods fostered trusting parent-teacher relationships and created positive environments that allowed for the communication of expectations and support in the needs of the families. As a result, Stanton Elementary teachers conducted 450 home visits by the end of the 2011-2012 school year, which showed major improvements in family engagement such as increased attendance at back-to-school nights. Also, with the new parent-teacher conference structure, parents were equipped with the tools needed to work with their children to increase academic performance, resulting in a 9% increase in reading scores and 18% increase in math scores on the campus. Also, the attendance at parent-teachers conferences jumped from 12% to 55% (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013).

Community organizations also play a significant role in parent engagement, specifically in the areas of educating and equipping parents with resources and improving the community.

First 5 Santa Clara, for instance, is an organization that focuses on preparing children and their families to attend primary education, along with connecting them to resources and other parents to build social capacity. Through their program, many campuses in the surrounding areas partnered with First 5 Santa Clara to produce initiatives like the Family Support Center and Kinder Academy which both assisted parents individually with the tools and resources needed for healthy early childhood development (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Your Family, Your Neighborhood (YFYN) created a 10-session program for families living in subsidized project-based housing. The mission of this organization is to meet community needs along with improving children's educational outcomes by increasing parent engagement in their children's academics and on school campuses. At the end of the program, parents reported an increase in the support of their children's academic activity, such as helping with homework, and reading to their children which led to their children doing better in school. Programs like this address broad community issues that promote greater school-parent connections. (Lechuga-Pena & Brisson, 2018).

Parental Engagement vs Parental Involvement

Among recent literature and policy initiatives, the term parent engagement has been used interchangeably with the term parent involvement. However, the interchangeable use of these terms causes a great disconnect between expectations and reality within school-parent relationships. Parent involvement is defined as parent participation in school-authorized activities that allow them to support their children's learning environment (Fenton et al., 2017; Horsford & Holmes-Sutton, 2012). These can include on-campus participation in activities such as PTA meetings, parent-teacher conferences, or other decision-making opportunities, communicating with school staff, volunteering in classrooms or field trips, and attending school

events (Clifford & Göncü, 2019; Day & Dotterer, 2018; Marschall & Shah, 2020). It also includes activities at home that support learning such as supervising and helping children with homework, creating a home environment, or having conversations that support academic success and future goals, and making sure their children are well-rested, fed, and ready to learn once they come to school (Clifford & Göncü, 2019; Day & Dotterer, 2018; Marschall & Shah, 2020). Lastly, parental involvement can be presented in parents placing their children in extracurricular activities on campus and participating in a school of choice or placement in specific courses or programs (Clifford & Göncü, 2019; Day & Dotterer, 2018; Marschall & Shah, 2020). Though these activities are seen as valuable by schools, researchers believe that these efforts limit parent participation to a one-sided school-centered agenda based on White middle-class expectations (Ishirmaru et.al, 2016; Marschall & Shah, 2020; Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2020; Yull & Wilson). Since most school-parent activities are pursued from an “involvement” focus, school campuses limit their pursuits of parent engagement to these activities, which continues to disengage parents of color (Ishirmaru et. al, 2016; Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2020).

Barriers to Parent Engagement

Despite policies and initiatives in place to move towards effective parent engagement, several gaps remain between existing parent engagement programs and parent participation. Research suggests a lack of ethnic minority parent engagement broadly across schools, especially among African American parents (Horsford & Holmes-Sutton, 2012; Marschall & Shah, 2020; Latunde & Clark-Louque, 2016). For example, some studies have found campuses that have predominantly White students, offer fewer programs targeting parent engagement compared to predominately African American or Latino campuses. However, the latter campuses have less parent participation compared to the former (Day & Dotterer, 2018; Marschall & Shah,

2020). Though there are many benefits to parent engagement, some campuses continue to struggle in creating and maintaining strong and positive parent engagement due to barriers in the lives of families and the efforts of the school. (D’Haem & Griswold, 2017; Marschall & Shah, 2020; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013).

Teacher Education & Professional Development

One of the barriers that causes campuses to struggle with establishing positive parent engagement is the lack of teacher education and training. Teachers report that in their first year in the classroom, they feel unprepared to engage parents and believe they could have received more education in this area (D’Haem & Griswold, 2017; Roekel, N.P.D.). Teachers also report that parent engagement is their greatest challenge to improve student outcomes (*Harvard Family Research Project*, 2011). In the education curricula at colleges and universities, some courses discuss parent engagement, but only in special education and early childhood specializations (*Harvard Family Research Project*, 2011; Roekel, N.P.D.). Courses offered at the pre-service level lack content that exposes educators to proper family-school-community partnerships beyond legal parent interaction requirements or parent-teacher conferences, and mainly teach skills needed for teaching in the classroom (D’Haem & Griswold, 2017; Roekel, N.P.D.). Researchers believe that these courses do not prepare educators to handle the different realities of working and communicating with parents or communities of color to create educational success for students (D’Haem & Griswold, 2017; *Harvard Family Research Project*, 2011; Roekel, N.P.D.; Theirs, 2017). A study done by D’Haem and Griswold examined education programs and teacher preparation in working with families of diverse communities. Among the results of the study, the first data found suggested that teacher educators and their student teachers held engaging with parents of high importance but limited its scope. Responses from those surveyed

did not bring up parents participating as advocates, learning at home, or collaborating with the community. In addition, the educators did not even discuss giving parents strategies on how to engage in these activities. The second piece of data found that teacher educators and their student teachers had some uncertainty about properly partnering with parents and expressed fear in communicating with them. Third, the study found an increased need for teacher educators and their student teachers to be knowledgeable in working with families from diverse backgrounds. This was a high concern amongst the group as they expressed not having the experience and the education from the courses offered (2017). This is important as over one-third of classroom students are diverse in language, religion, and racial backgrounds (*Harvard Family Research Project*, 2011). Teachers being uneducated in engaging parents from different races and socioeconomic backgrounds produces negative attitudes and assumptions about working with families in the inner cities. As a result, little effort is produced to effectively engage these parents, leaving them feeling pushed out of their child's academic journey (D'Haem & Griswold, 2017, Horsford & Holmes-Sutton, 2012; Roekel, N.P.D.).

Another important factor is campuses prioritizing and creating an open environment for engagement opportunities (Kraft, 2017; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). On most school campuses, principals and administrators are the leaders in proper parent engagement strategies (Fenton et al., 2017; Marschall & Shah, 2020) Principals have the role of designing and implementing the policies along with the expectations, culture, and norms of the school campus. They also serve a co-leader role in the community as a bridge to the school (Fenton et al., 2017). Their prioritization of family engagement programming activities and training can produce strong school-parent relationships and partnerships. (Marschall & Shah, 2020). However, administrators have also been found to be uneducated in the area of family engagement (*Harvard Family*

Research Project, 2011; Roekel, N.P.D.). In a study conducted on teacher-parent communication, teachers were found incapable of possessing time to contact parents due to lack of availability outside of instruction and campus duties (Kraft, 2017). If principals and other administrators are not educated and trained in the areas of parent engagement, they could risk failing to lead and prioritize engagement, resulting to ineffective efforts (Kraft, 2017; Theirs, 2017). For school campuses to effectively engage diverse families, researchers say that it is vital for teachers, administration, and other staff to and receive pre-service parent engagement courses and professional development in parent engagement be offered to veterans (*Harvard Family Research Project*, 2011; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; Roekel, N.P.D.; Theirs, 2017).

Race, Culture, and Socioeconomic Factors

With a history of challenges in meeting state educational standards, urban communities struggle gaining parent engagement amongst parents of color (Barajas-Lopez & Ishimaru, 2016; Horsford & Holmes-Sutton, 2012). If these parents do not meet an assumed level of engagement, they are seen as uncaring when it comes to their child's education (Barajas-Lopez & Ishimaru, 2016; Marshall & Shah, 2020). Despite the assumptions, multiple variables are found to be great predictors of parent engagement participation or lack thereof. Common themes among factors predicting engagement in school-based activities are parents having resources such as money, time, and skill (D'Haem & Griswold, 2017; Marshall & Shah, 2020; Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2020). Parents who possess the essential resources listed above mostly fall under a higher SES while the ones who do not, are a part of a lower SES (Marshall & Shah, 2020). For parents of color who fall within the lower SES, factors such as demanding work schedules, childcare, or lack of, and limited transportation hinder their engagement in on-campus activities or communicating with educators (D'Haem & Griswold, 2017; Marshall & Shah, 2020; Posey-

Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2020). Also, with an increase in immigrant families, language and cultural differences make engagement a difficult task for parents and educators to navigate successfully. Additionally, families composed of a single-parent household or where both parents work, which is mostly present in families of color, provide a challenge (Marshall & Shah, 2020; Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2020). One study pointed found that among single-parent households, mothers choosing to take time off from a demanding work schedule to attend an on-campus school event risks them losing money to provide for the family (Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2020). With these challenges, parents believe that educators do not understand, therefore hindering the relationship between the entities (Bajaras-Lopez & Ishimaru, 2016; Fenton et al., 2017; Yull & Wilson, 2018). As a result, lack of proper communication from campus, and school and home relationship tension prevent effective engagement (Marshall & Shah, 2020; Yull & Wilson, 2018).

Parent Roles and Self-Efficacy

Parent engagement has often been prioritized in the early years prior to Kindergarten as parents are expected to prepare their children for primary school (Horsford & Holmes-Sutton, 2012; Nix et al., 2018) However, once this time comes, and years following, parents are unsure of what their role is due to a lack of information or understanding of what is expected from them by educators (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; Marschall & Shah, 2020). Some parents feel incompetent and view teachers as having higher knowledge than them, therefore, entrust them with the education and academic decisions of their child (Cattanach, 2013; Theirs, 2017). For example, in immigrant Hispanic families, uneducated parents may leave the education of their child in the hands of the school and do not believe they can be involved. This leads to parents a part of this culture not enforcing positive educational practices such as studying at home, giving assistance

with homework, or asking for tutoring services (Cattanach, 2013). Families of color have social and cultural capital but may lack self-efficacy and experience role confusion when it comes to participating in educational activities (Bajaras-Lopez & Ishimaru, 2016; Theirs, 2017; Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2020). Also, with their social and cultural capital differing from the White middle class and Western norms, their voices can be lost and silenced while advocating for their children and others (Bajaras-Lopez & Ishimaru, 2016; Yull & Wilson, 2018; Fenton et al, 2017). Parents need to be reminded that have “funds of knowledge” about their children and their knowledge and ideas need to be pursued by educators to increase student success (Bajaras-Lopez & Ishimaru, 2016; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2020; Theirs, 2017).

Trends in African American Parent Engagement

As the target population for this study, African American parents have experienced limitations and barriers for opportunities of family-school partnerships and engagement. Due to negative views of their parenting styles, and lack of presence in on-campus activities, these parents have been perceived as uninvolved and uncaring towards their children’s educational journey (Marschall & Shah, 2020; Latunde & Clark-Louque, 2016; Yull & Wilson, 2018). However, research has found that these parents have high aspirations for their children’s academics and advocate for growth along with educating students inside and outside the home (Clifford & Göncü, 2019; Latunde & Clark-Louque, 2016; Posey-Maddox, 2016). A study conducted surveys on families with African American children enrolled in K-12 schools in California to assess their involvement in their children’s academic endeavors. Results found that most engaged in the education of their child by helping at home with their learning or pursuing outside educational activities. It was also found that African American parents connected to outside

sources like tutoring services, church, social groups, and fraternities and sororities to receive help in engaging in their children's academics (Latunde & Clark-Louque, 2016). A similar study conducted interviews with 14 low-income African American parents who had diverse backgrounds but lived in the same area. The results showed up in four themes: goals the community has for the education and development of children, the contexts of parental involvement, current barriers and supports and, dynamic partnership of home and school. The findings show that most of the parents' goals for their children are based around achievement in short term (mastering basic skills such as learning how to read), long term (going to college or getting a job), and social and personal growth. As it relates to involvement, parents were said to be involved in their child's learning through planned activities, every day or spontaneous activities, character development lessons at home. Community involvement for these parents included participating in communities' centers, summer camps, and attending meetings for neighborhood associations. Involvement at school parents stated they monitored activities such as a chaperone on field trips, responding to school requests and being involved with the classroom such as donating supplies or attending class events (Clifford & Göncü, 2019). Lastly a third study interviewed African American fathers as mothers are in most cases the point of contact and are assumed to be the main ones dealing with the children. Fathers interviewed in the Wisconsin area among various socioeconomic statuses showed similar trends in engagement efforts of their children's education and social development. Common trends were: setting goals, advice-giving and communicating high expectations, reinforcing and supplementing classroom curricula, making their presence of engagement known, and monitoring, advocating, and intervening against potential educator bias. These efforts at home and on-campus change the

narrative of the “uninvolved” African American father and label them as capable partners for effective engagement (Posey-Maddox, 2017).

School staff and teacher treatment of parents highly affects the possibility of school-based engagement (Fenton et al., 2017; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2020). With a history of racial discrimination and systemic racism in the education of African American children, African American families and school campuses’ relationships have been fractured (Posey-Maddox, 2016; Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2020; Yull & Wilson, 2018). Numerous studies have discussed the racial discrimination parents receive from school staff whether they are visiting campus to see about their child or active in school programming such as parent mentor groups (Posey-Maddox, 2016; Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2020; Yull & Wilson, 2018). When African American parents show passionate care and concern about their child’s academic and behavior performance, they are met with hostility, misunderstanding, microaggression, and dismissal from teachers and other school staff (Fenton et al., 2017; Yull & Wilson, 2018). In addition, negative assumptions about Black mothers as rude and disrespectful, and Black fathers as uninvolved and dangerous, cause tensions between parents and school personnel (Fenton et al., 2017; Posey-Maddox, 2016; Yull & Wilson, 2018). With African American parents placing high expectations on their youth to do well in education (Clifford & Göncü, 2019; Latunde & Clark-Louque, 2016; Posey-Maddox, 2016) they reportedly engage in stricter, “no-nonsense” approaches to ensure their children succeed despite the number of obstacles of racial inequalities they face (Day & Dotterer, 2018; Posey-Maddox, 2016). However, since this differs from the cultural norms, these parents’ efforts are viewed as unsupportive and harsh (Day & Dotterer, 2018), leading to their parental role and advocacy being undermined and ignored by school staff (Yull & Wilson, 2018). Fenton et al., states that

the misunderstandings between the two could originate from “cultural conflicts” between White superiority attitudes to Black inferiority (2017). This not only has parents on guard about approaching school staff (Yull & Wilson, 2018) but lead parents to share with their children how to handle similar occurrences (Fenton et al., 2017). Due to these factors and external racial discriminatory occurrences, parents engage in these talks in efforts to protect and educate their children as they go out into a world that criminalizes and discriminates against them (Fenton et al., 2017; Posey-Maddox, 2016).

Parental Engagement in Texas

Upon researching parent engagement efforts in the state of Texas, limited information was found. In 2017-2018, Houston Independent School District implemented the revised Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 and compiled a report on the outcomes of parent engagement efforts compared to the 2016-2017 school year. The report found that parent engagement cumulatively decreased from 48.9 percent in 2016-2017 to 44.7 percent in the 2017-2018 academic year. In the 2017-2018 school year Black or African American families experienced the lowest engagement rates compared to other ethnic groups and experienced the greatest decrease in parent engagement compared to the previous year. According to the HISD Title 1 Part A Parent and Family Engagement Survey of 2017-2018, school compacts and one on one parent-teacher conferences gained higher parent engagement rates than other activities such as family and parent literacy, education and training, and volunteering and planning. The survey also found that parents had positive reviews on the parent engagement efforts from their campuses. However, barriers found in parental engagement were due to lack of knowledge of events or activities, lack of childcare, and conflict with personal and work schedules. Lower parent participation in certain events or activities could have stemmed from parents seeing them

as optional or unnecessary if it did not involve family or their child. Also, during these years, Hurricane Harvey and the securing of safety and shelter may have contributed to diverse levels of engagement (*HISD Research Educational Program Report, 2019*).

Another study observed the parent engagement efforts of schools in Dallas County school districts with their increase in low-income Hispanic families. The author states that current bilingual parent engagement models on school campuses are designed to engage middle-class Hispanic parents instead of non-English speaking lower-income families who have little education. The latter then is alienated resulting in low parent participation. To improve engagement within this population, Grand Prairie Independent School District implemented a parent engagement center that offers ESL, nutrition, technology, and Zumba classes. They also offered a dual language program for their students, placed parent liaisons on campuses to assist parents as well as social workers to assist with immigration challenges. In parallel to program implementation, the district's academic scores increased with 3rd grade Science scores improving from 47 percent to 77 percent, and math scores from 65 percent to 81 percent from the years 2007 to 2010. Irving Independent School District created a new department, Student and Family Engagement, to assist with school-based parent engagement efforts. Each one of its 37 campuses has a parent outreach center open to all parents but specifically Hispanic parents with programs and literacy classes offered that increase parent involvement. In a 2012 survey, over 80 percent of parents were satisfied with campus communication from administrators and teachers (Cattanach, 2013).

FWISD and Epstein Model

Fort Worth Independent School District (FWISD) has the Department of Family Communications that focuses on parental engagement. On staff is a Director along with four Family Specialists that lead over specific areas in the district. Each campus has a Family Engagement Specialist or parent liaison who works to increase parent engagement on their campus using the Epstein model (*FWISD Department of Family Communications, 2021*). Dr. Joyce Epstein created the “Six Types of Parental Involvement”, a framework that proposes a partnership between the three main “spheres of influence” that affect children’s learning and development (Epstein, 2010). Through this framework, Dr. Epstein describes school, home, and community as “overlapping spheres of influence”, internal and external forces that collaborate to support student’s social-emotional development and learning (D’Haem and Griswold, 2017, Epstein, 2010; Fenton et. al, 2017). Dr. Epstein proposes that these partnerships can create positive outcomes in youth regarding education, development, and future aspirations (Epstein, 2010). The framework of Epstein’s Six Types of Involvement describes various practices and strategies: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community (D’Haem and Griswold, 2017; *FWISD Department of Family Communications, 2021*; Horsford & Holmes-Sutton, 2012). Fort Worth ISD added a seventh strategy to this list which is welcoming environment. Welcoming environment involves schools creating and maintaining an open campus environment to build positive relationships with all families. Involvement with parenting is described as schools assisting parents in creating a home environment that supports their children’s development (*FWISD Department of Family Communications, 2021*). Communication pertains to the creation of an effective school-home and home-school communication about everything from school events, programs, and student progress. Volunteering is defined as recruiting and advocating for parents to participate in school

programs and events that support their students and the school. Learning at Home promotes teachers assisting and educating parents in the best at home learning activities that match curriculum, and support academic growth of the child, such as helping with homework. Decision-Making takes form in schools allowing families to be included, participate, and advocate for improvements in school policy, and decisions. Activities such as PTO/PTA, Booster Clubs, or Site Based Decision Making Team are examples of parents involved in decision making. Lastly, collaborating with the community pertains to schools connecting with outside resources to assist students and families, along with serving in the community (D’Haem and Griswold, 2017; Epstein, 2010; *FWISD Department of Family Communications*, 2021; Horsford & Holmes-Sutton, 2012).

This model has been used in multiple schools and programs to increase parental and community involvement in the education and development of children. While Epstein is a popular model (Horsford & Holmes-Sutton, 2012), it is believed that Epstein's framework can evaluate engagement based on a school-centric and individualistic approach producing goals based on middle-class and White expectations and values (Latunde & Clark-Louque, 2016). One study completed on teachers in an elementary school found that though the teachers were implementing the strategies of the model, parental engagement was still low (Bower & Griffin, 2011). It was concluded that the use of the model did not capture how parents are or want to be involved and suggested to create new efforts to increase engagement of families of color (Bower & Griffin, 2011). Another study analyzed parent’s view of the model’s frequency and effectiveness and compared the responses based on race, education level, socio-economic status and the number of children at home (Newman et al., 2019). Results found that most parents agreed in each category that perception of the effectiveness and frequency of the model were low

(Newman et al., 2019). Other literature has expressed that the model is ineffective for low-income parents and parents of color as multiple variables make them unable to participate in these activities (D’Haem & Griswold, 2017; Horsford & Holmes-Sutton, 2012). Much of the research advocates for new approaches to achieve parent engagement and meet reform efforts in schools with children of color. (Fenton et al., 2017; Horsford & Holmes-Sutton, 2012; Ishimaru et.al, 2016; Latunde & Clark-Louque, 2016; Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2020). With the use of this model along with the educational and discipline disparities amongst African American youth, it can be assumed that a parental engagement gap is present in FWISD.

COVID-19

In March of 2020, the COVID-19 virus spread rapidly changing the way we do life and the operations of the systems around us. With the continuous spread of the virus, the practices of wearing a mask, social distancing, and limiting how often one goes out, have allowed citizens and establishments to accept a “new normal” to participate in necessary or even desired activities. This “new normal” has impacted the operations of schools at first most offering only virtual learning, to now offering face-to-face or virtual learning options. Once required to reopen, schools prepared to open with a little amount of time and not much guidance on how to engage in this new way of education. Teachers had to come up with ways to educate virtually while at the same time teaching in-person students which reportedly has been the greatest challenge across campuses (Johnson, 2020; Swaby, 2020) The pressures to opening schools also fell on parents who struggled with making the best decision for their children. For example, in a survey conducted by Fort Worth Independent School District, 52% of parents wanted their children to return to face-to-face learning, while 48% wanted to continue virtually (Johnson, 2020). Both options have had their risks with the virus spreading on school campuses between staff and

students forcing campus closures or self-isolating quarantines, and the ability and accessibility to online learning presenting challenges to students and their families (Swaby, 2020). According to the Texas Tribune, failing grades have become more frequent for virtual students due to factors such as confusing or fast-paced teacher instruction, issues with accessing material to complete assignments, and internet and technology complications (Swaby, 2020). Students may also need assistance with homework, which mostly falls on the parents, making it difficult for parents who work or may not understand how to help (Swaby, 2020).

According to one study conducted by the Society for Research in Child Development (2020), African American students and their families are experiencing some of the greatest challenges through the pandemic. Exposure to the virus due to working essential positions, crowded and poor living conditions, and dependence on public transportation makes them the highest amongst infection and death rates. Along with this exposure and underlying health issues, African Americans receive low-quality health assistance and are more likely to be underinsured. These disparities impact children's success in school due to increased exposure, loss of either family members or living essentials, and lack of support in learning. At the beginning of the pandemic, parents in California, New York, Texas, and Washington reported receiving little to no information from their child's campus about virtual learning resources. Also, African American students are more likely to attend school in under-resourced campuses with less technological support for virtual learning leading to underachievement in class (Gaylord-Harden et al.,2020). Before parent engagement was not a priority for school (Winthrop, 2020), however with social distancing and virtual learning challenges, parents are needed now more than ever to ensure that their children succeed.

Chapter Three

Methods

The purpose of this section is to introduce the qualitative exploratory research design chosen for this study regarding the perspective of African American parents on FWISD's family engagement model. The use of this approach allowed for a detailed exploration of the experiences of African American parent's with FWISD's parent engagement strategies prior to and during COVID, and how it impacts their children's educational success. This section will also provide information about the phenomenological research design, criterion-based sample, information about the researcher, data collection, and data analysis of this study.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the perspectives of African American parents on Fort Worth ISD's family engagement efforts for their children's educational success?

RQ2: How has the COVID-19 pandemic shifted African American parent's perspective of the Fort Worth ISD's family engagement efforts?

RQ3: How did transportation influence parental engagement pre-COVID and peri-COVID?

Methodology Selected

A primary, phenomenological study was used to gain the perspective of African American parents on FWISD's family engagement efforts based on the Epstein model. The qualitative approach was chosen because it provides a deeper insight into the real-world

problems of participants by gathering their perceptions, experiences, and behaviors (Creswell, 2007). This research starts with assumptions that African American parents may not be fully engaged due to education and behavior performance in Fort Worth ISD students along with the current COVID-19 pandemic challenge, but the perspectives of individuals were gained through the interview process (Creswell, 2007). A phenomenological study is one that details the meaning of multiple individual's lived experience of a concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). This study specifically follows Moustakas's transcendental or psychological phenomenology as it will focus more on describing the experiences of the participants and less on the researcher's interpretation (Creswell, 2007). Previous qualitative research has examined parental engagement from personal parent strategies and discussed limitations to engaging in school-centered involvement approaches; however, little is known about how parents perceive these efforts, if they helpful in their relationship with the school, and their student's educational success. Also, with the COVID-19 pandemic requiring campuses to operate in virtual, hybrid, or face-to-face learning, parent engagement efforts have been impacted. Due to social distancing requirements, campuses may limit school events, or parent-teacher meetings to virtual or canceled until further notice. Parents specifically in low-income neighborhoods may not have the technology, or the time, due to work schedules, to engage in virtual meetings, or those who would typically not be able to attend due to transportation barriers, may have been able to use virtual meetings to become more engaged. With the virtual learning options, parents are expected to support their students by making sure they attend class, help with homework, and communicate with teachers as much as possible to ensure their children are staying engaged with the education. With the new changes to the operations of school campuses, the family engagement of FWISD during COVID-19 was assessed from a sample of African American parents' perspectives to understand

the impact on the education of African American students before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is necessary to gain the direct perspective of these parents based on their experience within the district.

The Researcher

The researcher holds a Bachelors in Psychology and is currently a Masters of Social Work student. With previous experience working with students of color in Fort Worth as a community partner, and previous experience in the district as a parent liaison, the researcher is knowledgeable and capable of gathering insightful data for this study. The researcher has seen some of the challenges of families through work in the community. Also, through some of the work as a parent liaison, the researcher has observed some experiences families have faced. Since this study is phenomenological, to conduct it, the researcher will set aside their own personal experiences or bias and take on a fresh perspective towards the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2007) The researcher has also received training on the necessary skills needed to implement this research design, including learning how to avoid specific biases that may affect the data gathered in this study. Regarding positionality throughout the interview process, the researcher focused on the research questions verses own opinions to combat bias. The researcher also reflected in thought and notes after interviews and attended weekly debriefing meetings with the thesis chair. The researcher is a key instrument of this study as data was gathered through interviewing participants themselves using an interview protocol created by the researcher (Creswell, 2007). The second coder of this study is the thesis chair Jandel Crutchfield Ph.D., LCSW. Dr. Crutchfield is a fourth year Assistant Professor at the University of Texas at Arlington in the School of Social Work.

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Study Participants

The sampling strategy for this study was criterion sampling. Criterion sampling gathers data from participants who meet a predefined criterion and whose insight would be best for the study (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). These participants vary in individual characteristics and experience, but may have shared experiences (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The sample chosen was African American parents (mothers and fathers) living in the city of Fort Worth. Parents with students (Kindergarten-8th grade) currently enrolled in a Fort Worth ISD campus were sought specifically for this study. Their children had to be attending a Fort Worth ISD school during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as before the COVID-19 pandemic. There was no age or level of education requirement for participation. Participants were required to be fluent in the English language, but it did not have to be their first language.

After receiving approval from the institutional review board, the author recruited parents through partnerships with local community outreach centers that support families. The community centers chosen for this study were considered for the population of African American families in the surrounding area. One community center director was a community connection of the researcher; however, this relationship did not affect the validity of the data collected. The researcher emailed the agency's directors and supervisors informing them about the study asking for their assistance in recruiting parents as part of their agency. A site permission letter was sent along with the email which acknowledged the center's support of the project. Through these permission letters, these local community partners and the researchers agreed on a few methods to recruit parent participation. First, the local partners agreed to hand out recruitment flyers to

parents along with posting flyers in a visible location on site and on their social media platforms. These flyers provided a brief description of the project as well as how parents can contact the researcher and a \$25 Visa gift card incentive for participation. Second, with the permission of parents, local partners agreed to provide parent contact information of those interested in the project. Lastly, the researcher offered to present project information to parent groups meeting in person or via Zoom; however, this was not needed.

Meetings were held between researcher and community partner (four in-person and one virtually through Zoom) upon distributing flyers for recruitment. These meetings discussed the purpose of the study, data collection and recruitment, along with parental engagement amongst the center to brainstorm best recruitment strategies. Parents recruited for this study were mothers and fathers involved with agency or connected through a partnership with the agency. Approximately 60-70 parents were contacted for the study through flyer distribution, phone call or email. Approximately 20-30 parents expressed interest in participating in the study. After follow up and evaluation of criterion, 10 parents were interviewed. All participants were mothers of at least one Fort Worth ISD student between the grades of kindergarten-8th grade. After discussing with the thesis chair, (and second coder), we found that one mother interviewed, did not have a child recently in Fort Worth ISD before COVID, thus the data did not qualify for the study.

Data collection

Since this was a phenomenological study, fewer than 10 interviews were required (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Once parents were recruited, 10 semi-structured interviews were conducted. These interview questions were related to parent perspectives on both the FWISD engagement

model and the district's efforts to maintain engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic. The interview began with the researcher informing the parent about the structure of the interview. Once the interview and recoding started, the first questions asked parents to share about their family (years in Fort Worth ISD, grade(s) of Fort Worth ISD students, age of parent, relationship status, job/career, and any other important information). The next question asked parents to share their overall experience in Fort Worth ISD regarding their child(ren)'s education. After this, parents were asked to share about their overall experience in Fort Worth ISD regarding their child(ren)'s discipline. More intensive questions gained parent's insight on the Epstein model family engagement strategies: welcoming environment (added by FWISD) parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. Parents were asked if each of these strategies had been implemented with them by the district [pre-COVID] and if they are currently implemented to maintain their engagement [peri-COVID]. Questions also gathered insight on if parents believed these strategies were beneficial to their relationship with the school and their children's educational success. Lastly, parents were asked questions about how transportation influenced their engagement before and during the COVID-19 pandemic as well how virtual learning has influenced their engagement in their child(ren)'s education.

Interviews had three options for participants to choose from. First, virtual meetings were offered through the video conferencing software Zoom. Secondly, in-person interviews were offered on the site participants were recruited from and would follow social distancing and safety protocols. Lastly, telephone interviews were an option for those who were unable to access Zoom or meet in person. Two parents participated in a Zoom interview which was video, and audio recorded. No in-person interviews were conducted. Seven interviews were conducted over

the telephone and were audio-recorded. After the interview, the \$25 gift cards were mailed to parents. On average, most interviews lasted one (1) hour.

Data Analysis

Two audio recorded telephone interviews and one (1) audio recorded Zoom interview were uploaded and transcribed through Microsoft Word on Microsoft SharePoint. Transcriptions were reviewed and edited for accuracy by researcher. The remaining interviews, five (5) telephone and one (1) Zoom, were uploaded and transcribed through the audio and video transcription service Rev and then reviewed by the researcher. Once approved, the data analysis method followed the rigorous and accelerated data reduction (RADaR) technique (Watkins, 2017) RADaR is a quick and effective data reduction technique that is suitable for processing large amounts of interview or focus group data in qualitative studies (Watkins, 2017). The processes followed three phases. First, the researcher created a general Excel spreadsheet that contained the original transcriptions notes. Transcription responses were organized by question and section of the interview. Second, two independent coders, the researcher, and the thesis chair, coded the spreadsheet transcripts. Through this process, the coders met weekly to discuss any discrepancies in the coding. Third, coded transcripts were then reduced to significant statements or quotes then combined into themes (Creswell, 2007). The themes chosen surrounded the parent's overall experience and their perspective regarding the district's family engagement efforts in support of their children's education pre and peri COVID-19.

Chapter Four

Results

Results from this data are presented using the RADaR technique. Once transcriptions were imported into the excel sheet, the researcher and second coder, reduced information to what was needed to answer the research question (Watkins, 2017). The researcher and second coder then created and agreed on codes and then placed them into central themes (Watkins, 2017). This technique allowed for the reduction of bias during data analysis. Themes one through three reflect responses that discuss parent engagement efforts with Fort Worth ISD before (pre) and during (peri) the COVID-19 pandemic. Theme 1 is pre-COVID parent engagement mixed. Theme 2 is peri-COVID decrease in parent engagement. Theme 3 is peri-COVID hybrid learning challenges. Themes four through six reflect factors parents felt were important to their engagement in their child's education. Theme 4 is communication is central to parent engagement. Theme 5 is relationship is fundamental to parent engagement. Theme 6 is positive impacts of parent engagement. Theme 7, the last, reflects the influence of transportation on parent engagement pre-COVID-19 and peri-COVID-19: transportation barriers impact students more than parents. Demographics of parents in the study are provided in the table below.

Table 1

Demographic of Parents				
Name	Age	Status	Grade(s) of child(ren)	Years in Fort Worth ISD
Ms. Nikki Parker	44	Single	4 th	5 years
Ms. Tiss	35	Divorced	1 st and 2 nd	4 years
Ms. R	32	Single	1 st	7 years
Ms. Michelle	33	Single	5 th and 2 nd	5 years
Ms. Shay Carter	39	Married	1 st	3+ years
Ms. Simone	43	Divorced	2 nd	12 years
Ms. C	24	In a relationship	Kindergarten	2 years
Ms. Liamani	29	Single	1 st	1 year +
Ms. Alice Williams	36	Single	7 th grade	12 years

*Names provided are pseudonyms

Pre-COVID parent engagement mixed

In asking parents how they have seen Fort Worth ISD's parent engagement efforts, there was a mixed view amongst perspectives. Eight out of nine parents discussed how welcoming the campus was by recalling teachers, staff, and even community volunteers gathering in front of the campuses and high-fiving students, greeting parents, and walking students to class. These actions they expressed were enjoyable to see and made parents feel safe dropping their students off at school. Parents believed that a welcoming environment was also beneficial to their student's educational journey. Shay Carter, mother to a 1st grader shared:

"I have seen situations where kids are coming to school and they're not coming from a good place, and school is their safety. Seeing that the staff is there to greet them, letting them know, "Hey, regardless of what you just came from, we're here to protect you, we're good and we're going to make this fun...I think that is really beneficial for kids, to have somebody come and greet them every morning and afternoon."

Ms. Tiss, a mother of 4 (2 of which are Fort Worth ISD students), expressed the importance of a welcoming environment for her students and how its reflected in her relationship with the staff:

"I know it helps with the children's behavior. If they're not welcoming with the parents, they're not gonna be welcoming with the children, I say, but if they're welcoming with the parents, they're going to be more welcoming with the children in the classroom or everyday environment. and it'll help you know and children they can tell when you know a teacher doesn't like them. Or if they're trying to like standoffish, you, know, like you don't want to be there and that put them, the kid in a bad mood and help them with the bad behavior."

Parents also discussed the many varied pre-covid communication methods that campuses used to keep them informed on events, academic updates on their students, and other school related information parents needed to know. Most of these efforts took form of group texting apps such as Class Dojo, robo calls, flyers, newsletters and the use of the outside school billboard. These efforts, most parents said kept them informed and engaged when they could participate in activities.

Lastly, parents recalled more volunteering opportunities being available before COVID-19. Michelle, a single mother who serves a caregiver for her grandmother stated:

"...the campus that they were in before, there was always something, some type of event. Something going on, so there was always a chance for parents to volunteer. I've volunteered. I've been a chaperone, I've been class mom, field day mom, all of that. Whenever I have the time, I do try to volunteer with my kids,"

Other parents recalled coming to the school to help in the classroom, field trips, parent events and more. Parents engaged in these opportunities saw that it was not only beneficial to the school but also to their children. Many parents interviewed discussed how volunteering could help build rapport with the teachers and school staff, along with show their students how important their education is to them.

While these efforts above were seen the most, other parent engagement efforts (parenting, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the community) were not seen as much. Most expressed these other efforts were either not offered, limited or not communicated. Some parents recalled seeing or participating in adult education, ESL and nutrition classes offered before the pandemic. Some also discussed receiving learning assistance during breaks

such as Christmas and summer. Most parents saw decision making opportunities available in participation in PTA or PTO but most were not involved in that capacity. Though these efforts were limited or not available, many of the parents thought these efforts were beneficial towards their engagement in their students education and their student's academic success. When discussing collaborating with the community, Ms. Tiss, shared:

" I think that I mean schools are a big part of communities...I say the base of the communities really, You know, that's where we're growing up our future leaders you know Doctors, lawyers and things like that. So I mean with them, reaching out to the community and you know kids can see they can tell there's something off you know with that not only within their home, but you know it's just around them. You know, if there's this trust with the community and the schools, and I think we can feel that, and then there might be uproar, you know if there's something really serious, it all trickles back down to the kids, even if it's between oh, just the parents and this you know but it trickles out all the way back down."

When discussing decision making, Ms. Liamani a kindergarten mom shared:

" If a parent can have an input on something, do a survey, say anything you know, recommend stuff it makes that parent feel more involved and want to get more involved if they have parent, you know, say so or we need your decision on this or we would like you to contribute when you contribute to something and you feel proud. You feel like you did something for your child. You feel more not obligated but more enthusiastic. It gets your hopes up like I just did that. It makes you happy."

Peri-COVID decrease parent engagement

When discussing efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic (peri-COVID), almost all parents discussed FWISD efforts being limited. When asked about parent engagement efforts towards virtual learning, Nikki Parker expressed:

"It's limited on the engagement, of course, because we don't see those faces in person and sometimes that personal person interaction is needed. So I say its limited it, but it hasn't stopped, but it's limited."

Other participants interviewed, like Ms. Parker, believed that engagement efforts were limited because of virtual learning or social distance requirements. As listed above, some of the previous efforts were either limited or unknown. When asked, parents shared some of these same efforts were not offered during COVID as well. Alice Williams, a self-employed mom of two shared:

" I say that if you have bad practices and you don't work on them, they're going to decline, especially when you, at this point, don't have as many people in person and now you're online. So I can't say that COVID-19 did this, I can only say that you have to have stuff in place, and here comes COVID."

Another reason some parents believed there might be a decrease of engagement during this time was the teachers' new load with hybrid learning. Addressing the topic of communication during COVID, Ms. Simone shared:

"Not so much since the pandemic. Now again, if they could have had a little texting link or I know they set up email, I just want to be able to get daily updates because before when he was younger, because he is just in the second grade, I got a folder to see how he was doing every day

or what he could improve on, if he had a bad day. Then I know what's addressed and how to handle it. I don't have that as much. I know it's hard because the teachers are trying to... And it's a lot on them teachers, so I don't blame the teachers."

With engagement being limited but not completely gone, some parents have seen the district do more in the area of engagement because of the pandemic. Some parents shared that the district, or their specific school campus, have put in more efforts to support them during the pandemic. Regarding communication from the school, parents discussed receiving calls from the district updating them on important news, receiving calls or text from the principal or teachers on things regarding the school or their student, and attending Zoom meetings in place of in-person parent teacher conferences. There have also been some efforts from the district supporting family needs during the pandemic. Ms. C, a mother of two (kindergartner in Fort Worth ISD) shared:

"During COVID, they send out everything with the electricity bill there has been a lot of those emails updates, what's going on or what they will be doing or if they're going to have a set class on this day, that day, they called, they'd leave voice mails, they would tell us, hey we have this coming up, but you can get on Zoom and from 6:00 to 8:00 we'll be having a class. they give you all the information and they call you, text you or email you. They reach out most of the time, they're like, hey, this is what we'll be doing this for the community. We're giving lunches out between 11:00 and 12:00 or, they reach out and what I'll do, we'll be doing within the community."

Michelle shared:

"Yeah, during COVID, most of the community collaborations that I've seen are pretty much COVID-based, like the vaccinations. They sent out, what was it? A text message letting us know

that we could go to the schools and get vaccinations. They're working to give everybody in the community vaccinations. If you can't afford it, it's free. They're doing all of this for free, so, and then of course they have food drives. People who were out of work or didn't have cars, couldn't get their kids when school was closed for quarantine, they were still delivering food to the kids and all of that. I just realized that was a good way for them to give back to their community."

Even with the decrease in engagement and COVID-19 restrictions, most parents still believed that if the district made efforts to engage them it would have been valuable. Most of the efforts, parents believed were needed with the challenging times of COVID.

Peri-COVID hybrid learning challenges

In addition to COVID-19 limiting parental engagement on campus, parents expressed numerous times the challenges of hybrid learning during the pandemic. These challenges not only impacted their student's education, but their levels of engagement as well. Most challenges were linked to lack of technology or access to internet, confusion with the virtual environment, and parents having to assist with virtual learning. Nikki Parker shared the increased responsibility she has in her son's virtual learning during COVID:

"Learning at home during COVID has been a lot more difficult trying to keep them engaged especially dealing with hybrid environments and things like that and trying to work at the same time. So it's not the easiest thing to do...They've given some but like I said, I tried best to implement the best I could with what I had going on too. Because it's hard to have a 9 year old at home, trying to teach him and working at the same time."

Ms. Simone, a mother of 3 who kept her youngest son, a second grader in virtual learning due to the fear of contracting the virus, also shared the responsibility she has managed:

"Versus now, I don't know, unless I walk in, listen in the classroom or he tell me, or I have him pull up his laptop and see missing assignments. It's more homework for me now versus it was easier. I know I'm on top of it but I'd really feel like he'd learn more if he was at school. Because there are some days I'm too tired to help and that's holding myself accountable because that's for the teacher to hold them accountable, which I hold him accountable when I get home but now I'm having to hold him accountable at home for not just home based stuff but for school too.

In-person learning also demonstrated challenges for participants. Some of these challenges discussed include the lack of communication on assignments or grades and the balance of virtual and in-person students by teachers. Shay Carter, a stay at home mom, took her daughter out of in-person learning so she could be home with her. She brought up an issue she had when her daughter was in-person:

"In this class, I have found out twice that my child has not completed her work in this class for two weeks, and the teacher never, never notified me, emailed me, anything. The only way I found out is that I did my own investigation because I'm that parent. I need to know. That everything is okay, and you're on top of everything, and I didn't like it. I didn't like that, and I still haven't heard any response of why you haven't notified me, if this has happened twice throughout the school year, and she's gone two weeks without doing her assignments. Now, she did assignments in every other class, so why your class, and why haven't you notified me? Yeah, that's my big upset."

Ms. Tiss who chose in-person learning for her students shared the challenges she's seen with teachers :

"During COVID there's been a lot of mixed up with the you know they like take home folders sometimes. It's "oops we forgot to do the take home folders we forgot to put the homework in it for today, things like that. I'm thinking like there's a lot going on in the classroom. I know teachers are doing that. I know that especially trying to get the children virtually to pay attention as well as the in-person, so I'm thinking. You know it's a lot."

Ms. R whose daughter attended in-person classes discussed:

"We don't be getting instructions on some of the stuff. But they want you to do Class Dojo and everything like that. Sometimes people don't have the access to Class Dojo. So by that, I will be like, "Okay, I would think they would put a paper in the folder to let us know like, "Hey." By the time I end up finding out about a project, it will be the day before the project is due. And I'll be like, "They didn't put nothing in your folder and tell me about nothing." Usually a teacher will slip something in there or give a parent a reminder, but I don't be on that little Class Dojo too much, so I be losing everything."

Communication is central to parent engagement

As stated above in the pre-COVID parent engagement theme, communication was one of the most seen efforts by Fort Worth ISD before COVID. Communication was also a central theme for parent engagement during COVID-19. Alice Williams shared this on communication with her son's (7th grade) school:

"Very hit and miss. One teacher may do something brave and another doesn't. And that even reflects down to the grade recording and follow up and persistence. So before COVID, it did not look any different after COVID. It literally just got worse because they had more on their plates."

Ms. C shared her communication experience with her son's (Kindergarten) school:

"This year is a little bit different, they are involving the parents much more now because they're able to reach out and do so much with the emails, phone calls and setting up Zoom, so it's much better now."

Despite the level of communication before and during the pandemic, what all parents agreed on is the need for communication in order to be engaged. Multiple parents shared that they did not know about engagement activities because it wasn't communicated to them or they were unaware. Lack of effective communication or follow up also hindered parental engagement as well. They mentioned not knowing things ahead of time, missing opportunities because of schedule conflict or schools not ensuring they received the information. Related to the benefit of communication, Nikki Parker, a very involved working mother of a 4th grader said:

"...a parent should know that the doors are always open and that, regardless of what may be going on there's always need for improvement and there's always a use for more involvement. So you know being a parent that works is always good to know what's going on Because I do have to work around a schedule and things like this so having a parent meeting at 10:00 AM is not beneficial for me. And you put it outside on the Billboard the week of is not helpful. There's something that you would think that you communicate a week or two in advance for those parents who do work."

Parents agreed that communication was important for engagement in their children's education. Regarding her daughter's education, Michelle expressed the importance of communication which was a shared response among a couple of the other parents:

"If I don't know what's going on, I can't do anything about it, or I can't change it. If there is a problem with her behavior, if I don't have any communication from the school, I can't do anything about that, or if there's a problem where my kids need to be tutored or something like that, I need some type of communication."

Communication, parents also expressed, allows for there to be a partnership between the parents and the school removing confusion in children's academic pursuits. Shay Carter expressed:

"We're here, you're wanting the parent to help you, the teacher, with the lesson plans. You're teaching these kids and you're wanting us to help to refresh it at home, keep it fresh on their mind. Things of that sort, so they can remember. If you're not communicating to me, and I'm not knowing that she's not even doing your work, or she's not doing whatever it is, how am I supposed to help you, if you're not helping me? We're supposed to be on this accord."

Relationship is fundamental to parent engagement

Along with communication, most of the parents also shared the importance of building rapport or having a relationship with their children's teacher or school staff. For the parents, relationships were fundamental to their engagement. When asked about the benefit of receiving learning at home assistance from her daughter's teachers, Ms. Tiss shared:

"It shows that the school and the teachers they care about what's happening and how the learning is going on in at home. It shows that they're really trying with, they're working with you to try to get try to help your child learn trying to help them to succeed."

Relationships built on trust are needed for parents to feel safe and at ease with leaving their child in the care of school staff. Ms. C shared:

"...whatever relationship they have with the kids, they still have to have with the parent or guardian. So if my kids feel safe with them, I feel safe that my kid feels safe. And it's a good relationship. Or if my kid likes them, then I can see, without being with them like, "Oh, okay. She really does mean good to my child, and want to see him do better and feel safe."

Relationships between the parents and the school were also reflected in parents feeling like they invited in to support the school and their child's education. When discussing decision making opportunities, Ms. Simone shared:

"...you want to feel like your voice is heard and it's appreciated. Appreciate those that want to help out and make this better..."

Ms. R. shared this on decision making opportunities:

"It would probably be way better. Because I just love being around kids. But me being there and helping them grow and be strong, it be like, "Okay look at the kids, they happy." And by the school letting me be here, it's good. But Fort Worth ISD, really giving someone that opportunity."

Positive impacts of parent engagement

Most parents interviewed for this study agreed that there is an important benefit pre-COVID and peri-COVID for the district to engage them in their children's education. Nikki Parker shared:

"It's showing him that I'm showing up for him even when even when I'm not asked. Because a lot of times, you know like I said our kids see us there when things are going wrong and not one thing before right or just with things that just gone, period. You know, I'm there it doesn't it doesn't have to be because you were bad today it doesn't have to be because it's anything special."

Parents saw opportunities for engagement with school as influential in creating a positive learning environment for their children. Shay Carter shared on the topic of welcoming environment:

"I think that it helps all kids, not just mine. I feel like kids do better when they're in a happy, stress-free environment, and if there are educators welcoming the kids with smiles on their faces and high fives and stuff, kids like that. They're going to go into their classrooms happy and ready to learn."

Alice Williams also shared on the importance of welcoming environment:

"It would literally be an extension of them leaving the house and going to what we would call like their second mom or their second dad. It feels like family. It's a necessity."

Parents discussed schools and teachers being in partnership with them as they support their child's education: Ms. Simone share this:

"If you see my child struggling with something I might not see, please let me know. I want to know. I want to be on one accord with my child's teacher so we can both be helping my child learn the best way possible. I feel if all of that, if all teachers, all staff in the school were on the same accord with parents, it would help things run a lot smoother."

Ms. Liamani shared:

"I think seeing more parent involvement gives the kids that satisfaction that my mommy cares. Or if it's a single parent household like mine, I make sure my both boys know that I'm here whenever you need to. Whenever you need to talk whenever you don't get something, understand. Ask me. And that's what the school represents. They want parents to ask questions, so it's like my it's passed down the school wants you to ask questions. Then they want the kids to ask the parents questions, and that's how the parents come back to the you know, it's a full circle."

Transportation barriers impact students more than parent

In discussing how transportation impacted parental engagement before and during COVID, parents did not identify transportation as a barrier to parental engagement." Most parents had transportation to engage with the school, especially before COVID. However, personal family challenges during COVID such as job loss, car struggles and adjusting to the "new normal" impacted students returning to school. Ms. Tiss shared her experience during COVID:

"I was furloughed from both my jobs I had before you know when COVID hit and then the day care wasn't open for a while, it was, it was to essential employees you know and they were, you know, there main transportation for me. So when I was trying to go out job hunting and all that stuff it kind of, put, it was kinda hard to get them to school and then doing jobs they have

training set to be there all week. You know 7:00 AM. Stops at 5:00 PM and my kids are too young for the after school program so they weren't able to go and plus they weren't doing them anyway So It was it was kinda hard with that so I had took a choice to just sit out You know or try to do virtually well it's like "I need a job". So I mean the transportation I mean that messes up jobs and everything so"

A few parents discussed public transportation barriers during COVID that impacted attendance. Ms. R expressed:

"It wasn't no bus riders. They didn't have no bus running. The schools was closed. It just impacted everything. It took a minute and then they started letting them starting riding, I think like a week later.

Ms. C shared:

"Well, also when they brought the daycare back to school, and that no longer had been happening because of the COVID. So that kind of put a bump in to our children school on time. So I now take them and pick them up."

One mother, Michelle shared transportation barriers for her daughter before and during COVID:

"When she first started at AM Pate back then, I didn't have a car, so I needed her to ride the bus. They told me because I live so close to the school, that I couldn't get her on the bus. The closest bus stop would be way far from my house, over by the hitching post or somewhere. That's where the bus would take her, and I was like, "Why?" It should be easy for her to get a bus. We're right here by the school. That's my only problem with transportation with Fort Worth ISD that I have.

There are no buses for kids who live, what they would call walking distance. I wouldn't call this walking distance, because I'm not going to walk to the school, and I'm not going to let my kids walk to the school.”

Virtual learning students and their parents did not experience any transportation barriers.

Chapter Five

Discussion

Parent engagement involves a collaborative partnership between schools, families and communities to create various meaningful activities that support children's overall development and learning and decrease educational disparities in youth (Fenton et al., 2017; Horsford & Holmes-Sutton, 2012; Lechuga-Pena & Brisson, 2018). This study sought to gain the perspective of African American parents on Fort Worth ISD's efforts to engage them in their student's education. This study explored the parent's perspectives pre-COVID and peri-COVID. Also, this study gathered information about the influence transportation had on parental engagement pre-COVID and peri-COVID.

Regarding parental engagement efforts by Fort Worth ISD pre-COVID, perspectives of the district's efforts were mixed. Most engagement efforts were seen pre-COVID compared to peri-COVID, but some efforts were not seen by parents. Efforts around the strategies welcoming environment, communication and volunteering were seen the most pre-COVID while strategies such as learning at home, parenting, decision-making and collaborating with the community were limited, unavailable or unknown. From the information gathered, efforts of engagement, whether seen or not, highlighted what studies say is a one-sided school-based agenda (Clifford &

Göncü, 2019; Day & Dotterer, 2018; Marschall & Shah, 2020). The activities discussed from parent perspectives above align with what multiple sources describe as involvement efforts and not engagement efforts (Clifford & Göncü, 2019; Day & Dotterer, 2018; Marschall & Shah, 2020.) Parents in this study discuss things such as lack of effective communication, work obligations, and scheduling conflicts that hinder their involvement in school-based activities. These hinderances have been repeated throughout the literature as having a negative impact on school-based parental involvement specifically in families of color (D’Haem & Griswold, 2017; Marshall & Shah, 2020; Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2020), but approaches based on school-centered agendas to parental engagement are still followed and expected. School districts like Fort Worth ISD only or mostly offering these opportunities, limits parents to these school-based activities that requires them to be available and engaged when schools want them to be Nikki Parker discussed an experience she had at her son’s schools that supports this thought:

“I was heard on a microphone coming up at the door, “Um she’s here.” “She’s here?” You know, things like that. And then it makes you wonder, what are you doing to my child behind closed doors? It’s [engagement] confined to when I [the school] want you available. And it shouldn’t be that way.”

Studies describe engagement efforts as pursuits in a manner where schools and community members go out to parents in support of education and child development. Outreach activities such as home-visits, working with and in the community that families live in, and addressing the needs of families have been seen to increase parent participation in the academic activities of their children (Lechuga-Pena & Brisson, 2018; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Though beneficial and effective in producing positive outcomes for student success (Epstein, 2010), parental involvement efforts have limited success in engaging parents of color long term in the

education of their children (Ishirmaru et.al, 2016; Marschall & Shah, 2020; Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2020; Yull & Wilson). An implication is that districts adapt more of a parental engagement framework, such as the dual capacity framework (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013), to intentionally build relationships with their parents which will lead to increased engagement in their student's academic journey. This will not only lead to increased current participation, but will produce long-term positive results in youth in areas of attendance, behavior, academic performance and achievement, and future college enrollment (Horsford & Holmes-Sutton, 2012; Kraft, 2017; D'Haem & Griswold, 2017; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013)

Almost all parents expressed a decrease in parental engagement efforts peri-COVID. One reason parent believed there was a decrease was the limited in-person events or meetings due to the COVID-19 social distancing requirements. Parental engagement has been limited to mainly virtual meetings or phone calls from the school regarding information about the students or school. Some parents discussed these efforts as helpful during the pandemic, but most preferred in-person efforts similar to before the pandemic. Parents also saw the new load on teachers as a reason for the parental engagement decrease. Teachers had to return to school with little to no knowledge on distance education, and when schools opened back up, were expected to manage in-person and virtual classes for families who made those choices (Crompton et al., 2021; Boltz et al., 2021). Along with this, most parents in this study discussed the challenges of the hybrid learning options during the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on their return to learning and their engagement. Challenges from the quick transition to virtual learning at the beginning of COVID were expressed. Parents discussed lack of technology, Wi-Fi or access to online classrooms. As campuses opened, parents made the choice of whether to send their students back to in-person or keep them in virtual learning. Despite the choice, almost all families in the study

expressed challenges in the new hybrid learning set up. Virtual parents discussed the confusion of online learning links, accessing and turning in homework and seeing grades for their students. In-person parents saw teachers struggling with communication or information regarding assignments or homework instructions, the juggle with online and in-person students, and not keeping parents updated with how students were doing. On top of the other responsibilities they have, parents agreed that there was an increased responsibility placed on them to stay on top of their kid's schoolwork and to help them figure out how to navigate homework and other tasks. Families were also met with personal challenges during COVID. Previous studies found that transportation, along with work schedules, childcare and other personal barriers can hinder parental engagement (D'Haem & Griswold, 2017; Marshall & Shah, 2020; Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2020). After gathering data from these parents, it was found that transportation did not hinder their engagement in their student's education pre-COVID or during COVID, but transportation challenges, specifically during COVID hindered children's attendance and return to the "new normal" school functions. A few parents discussed losing their jobs or trying to find another job as hindering their schedules and creating personal challenges in their children return to school. They also discussed job challenges leading to transportation challenges causing their children to be late or absent from school. The benefit for most parents, especially those who were virtual is that transportation was not an issue for their students. Virtual parents expressed being able to assist their children with homework, see grades when posted, and meet with teachers for help with assignments or receive updates on student progress. A few parents preferred this method as it made them feel more engaged in their child's education.

Schools and families both had numerous obstacles to face navigating the new normal that has lasted longer than expected. Though a challenge, sources express that parental engagement is

needed now more than ever during these times (Alberty, 2021; Gutierrez et al., 2020). At the beginning of COVID and currently for some, virtual students are experiencing what one study calls an emergency remote education (ERE) (Crompton et al., 2021). While this method continues learning during emergency situations, challenges such as access to technology, communication, and student learning and engagement can hinder the success of virtual students (Crompton et al., 2021). With the new tasks required of school to ensure students are still learning, parents are needed to support their students learning by ensuring that classwork is completed along with creating a positive learning environment for those who are virtual (Gutierrez et al., 2020). Sources recommend teachers taking time to build relationships with parents through communication and seeking new ways to engage parents online. This can help parents know what to do to support their student's education during the pandemic (Alberty, 2021; Gutierrez et al., 2020). Seeking parents as "coeducators" as one source says by offering educational training for them was also recommended (Alberty, 2021; Gutierrez et al., 2020).

As parents describe their thoughts on their engagement experiences in Fort Worth ISD, communication was one of the most discussed efforts pre-COVID and peri-COVID. Parents expressed the multiple efforts campuses made pre-COVID to recruit their engagement as well as its importance peri-COVID to assist them with hybrid learning and other important school information. However, they also discussed the lack of communication that hindered their engagement which was similarly found in the report on Houston ISD (*HISD Research Educational Program Report*, 2019). Most parents expressed frustration and disappointment behind their school's lack of communication which sources says can leave parents feeling pushed out of their child's academic journey (D'Haem & Griswold, 2017, Horsford & Holmes-Sutton, 2012; Roekel, N.P.D.). These parents repeatedly expressed the need for communication

from the school to be on “one accord”, a phrase used multiple times by parents, with the school when it comes to their child’s education. Another most discussed factor behind parent engagement that parents shared was a relationship with the school staff and teachers. Few parents discussed having the teacher’s phone number and how that made them feel connected to the teacher. Other parents discussed a disappointment in lack of rapport with the school staff. Despite how engagement was perceived, all parents agreed on the benefit of the district engaging them in their children’s education. Though literature discusses African American parents are seen as uncaring or uninvolved (Marschall & Shah, 2020; Latunde & Clark-Louque, 2016; Yull & Wilson, 2018), parents interviewed in this study were very caring and involved in multiple ways. For example, parents from this study were recruited from community organizations that supported their family and their children’s education development. This further supports the discussion presented in the Latunde and Clark-Louque (2016) study that parent engagement efforts among African American parents may be “untapped” . Parents in this study believed that their engagement in a partnership with the school and teachers is needed to show their children their support. They believe the districts efforts are also needed to create a positive learning environment for their children. It can be assumed that the parents of this study agree with the points made in multiple studies that positive engaging environment support student learning (Day & Dotterer, 2018; D’Haem & Griswold, 2017; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; Marschall & Shah, 2020).

Multiple studies states that positive relationships between parents and schools are needed for academic success (Day & Dotterer, 2018; D’Haem & Griswold, 2017; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; Marschall & Shah, 2020) In order for schools to build relationships with school staff, one implication is for schools to see parents as “funds of knowledge” when it comes to assisting their

students. In addition, schools need to help parents build self-efficacy in their engagement in their child's education as well as role-construction that allows for a partnership between school and parents (Barajas-Lopez & Ishimaru, 2016; Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2020; Theirs, 2017). This can be done by districts embracing these methods and holding school accountable to increase parent engagement. Multiple studies have expressed the importance of parent engagement being offered as courses to teachers in college or university, training for veteran teachers and for principals to prioritize it on their campuses (*Harvard Family Research Project*, 2011; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; Roekel, N.P.D.; Theirs, 2017).

Limitations

One limitation of this study is the limited in-person activity within the community due to the COVID-19 social distancing requirements. The community centers partnered with for this study experienced low enrollment due to state safety regulations amid the virus. This created a challenge for recruitment of parents for participation in this study. Recommendations for future studies are to connect to more community organizations along with attending any in-person groups hosted by the organizations. The second limitation of this study is the sample size. Though this is a phenomenological study which needs no more than 15 participants, the small sample size only represents a small portion of the population targeted for this study. A recommendation for future studies is to expand to larger group of parents, including fathers, to receive perspectives that represents a higher portion of the population. Another recommendation based on the limitations of qualitative inquiry is to add a quantitative component to gather data. Strategies such as surveys could not only gather more data for the study but reach more participants that could complete the study as well as serve as an option for safety regulations with COVID-19. Last limitation was audio issues through telephone interviews.

Recommendations for future studies are to conduct interviews on way, either through virtual or in-person, to limit this issue.

Conclusion

This study gathered parent's perspective on the efforts Fort Worth ISD has taken pre-COVID and peri-COVID to ensure parent engagement is achieved for the academic success of their students. With beliefs that African American parents are uninvolved and uncaring towards their children's education, it can be connected to the academic performance and behaviors amongst their youth. African American students continue to fall behind their White peers in subjects such as math and reading and are highly represented in suspension and expulsion rates compared to their peers (Marschall & Shah, 2020; Latunde & Clark-Louque, 2016; Yull & Wilson, 2018). Currently Fort Worth ISD has the lowest literacy scores in the state (Allen, 2021; Chavez, 2018) along with high suspension rates amongst their African American students (Caldera, 2018). Parent engagement is a tool that has been linked to academic success in youth and improving attendance, grades, behavior, and lead to future college enrollment (Day & Dotterer, 2018; D'Haem & Griswold, 2017; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; Marschall & Shah, 2020) With these current disparities amongst youth, parent perspectives on parent engagement are crucial to address ways to improve efforts and collaborate in a partnership that will lead to long-term academic success. Implications for future work in social work is for students to advocate for African American families in educational settings. Through courses or assignments discussing diversity amongst families and their engagement in education can allow social work students to be educated in the needs amongst these families to increase engagement. One implication for future research is for studies to expand to a larger sample size, including fathers, to gain a larger perspective of how parents view parent engagement efforts. A second implication for future

research is to redefine parent engagement efforts amongst school campuses. Parents from this study agreed that parental engagement needs to be founded through relationships with the school and is maintained through effective communication. They also are not engaged just in school lead activities, but also outside activities at home and in the community that allows for them to support their children's education. The way parents are engaged and how they desire to be engaged should be considered for future efforts. Lastly, an implication for practice is for parent engagement trainings to be created and enforced. School social workers, teachers, school staff and administrators should be educated in parental engagement approaches to increase the engagement of families in the academic and socioemotional development of their children.

Appendix

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. How many years have you been apart of Fort Worth ISD?
2. Please tell me more about your family (ages and grade of children, martial status, parent age)
3. What has been your overall experience with Fort Worth ISD regarding your child(ren)'s education?
4. What has been your overall experience with Fort Worth ISD regarding discipline with your child(ren)?

7 Strategies of Involvement

Fort Worth ISD uses 7 strategies in pursuit of quality Family Engagement from the Joyce Epstein Model. Let us look through each of these strategies and answer these four questions.

(Provide parents copy of Quality Engagement activity sheet)

1. How have you seen your Fort Worth ISD campus(es) present this strategy before COVID-19?
2. How have you seen your Fort Worth ISD campus(es) present this strategy during COVID-19?
3. Do you believe this strategy is beneficial towards your relationship with the school campus? How so?
4. Do you believe this strategy is beneficial towards your children's educational journey? How so?
5. Is there anything else you would like you to share with me about this topic?

Specific Strategy questions:

Welcoming Environment

1. How have you seen your Fort Worth ISD campus(es) present a **welcoming environment** before COVID-19?
2. How have you seen your Fort Worth ISD campus(es) present a **welcoming environment** during COVID-19?
3. Do you believe a **welcoming environment** is beneficial towards your relationship with the school campus? How so?
4. Do you believe **welcoming environment** is beneficial towards your children's educational journey? How so?

Parenting

1. How have you seen your Fort Worth ISD campus(es) present the **parenting** strategy before COVID-19?
2. How have you seen your Fort Worth ISD campus(es) present **parenting** strategy during COVID-19?
3. Do you believe the **parenting** strategy is beneficial towards your relationship with the school campus? How so?
4. Do you believe the **parenting** strategy is beneficial towards your children's educational journey? How so?

Communicating

1. How have you seen your Fort Worth ISD campus(es) present **communicating** before COVID-19?

2. How have you seen your Fort Worth ISD campus(es) present **communicating** during COVID-19?
3. Do you believe **communicating** is beneficial towards your relationship with the school campus? How so?
4. Do you believe **communicating** is beneficial towards your children's educational journey? How so?

Volunteering

1. How have you seen your Fort Worth ISD campus(es) present **volunteering** opportunities before COVID-19?
2. How have you seen your Fort Worth ISD campus(es) present **volunteering** opportunities during COVID-19?
3. Do you believe **volunteering** is beneficial towards your relationship with the school campus? How so?
4. Do you believe **volunteering** is beneficial towards your children's educational journey? How so?

Learning at Home

1. How have you seen your Fort Worth ISD campus(es) present **learning at home** assistance before COVID-19?
2. How have you seen your Fort Worth ISD campus(es) present **learning at home** assistance during COVID-19?
3. Do you believe **learning at home** assistance is beneficial towards your relationship with the school campus? How so?

4. Do you believe **learning at home** assistance is beneficial towards your children's educational journey? How so?

Decision Making

1. How have you seen your Fort Worth ISD campus(es) present **decision-making** opportunities before COVID-19?
2. How have you seen your Fort Worth ISD campus(es) present **decision-making** opportunities during COVID-19?
3. Do you believe **decision-making** opportunities is beneficial towards your relationship with the school campus? How so?
4. Do you believe **decision-making** opportunities is beneficial towards your children's educational journey? How so?

Collaborating with the Community

1. How have you seen your Fort Worth ISD campus(es) present **collaborating with the community** before COVID-19?
2. How have you seen your Fort Worth ISD campus(es) present **collaborating with the community** during COVID-19?
3. Do you believe **collaborating with the community** is beneficial towards your relationship with the school campus? How so?
4. Do you believe **collaborating with the community** is beneficial towards your children's educational journey? How so?

Transportation questions:

1. Describe any transportation barriers that have impacted you child(ren)'s school attendance during COVID-19?
2. In regard to your participation in on campus school activities, describe any transportation challenges before COVID or during COVID?
3. Describe how virtual learning has impacted your ability to engage with your child's school?

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