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The Parent Advisory Council for Spanish-Speaking Parents: A Program Evaluation

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THE PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR SPANISH-SPEAKING PARENTS:

A PROGRAM EVALUATION

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

BY

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CHICAGO, IL

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For those who have supported me, my family and my mentors.
Thank you.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The estimated percentage of English Language Learning (ELL) students has

grown substantially over the last 15 years, from 8.7% during the 2002-2003 school year

to 9.1% during the 2011-2012 school year to 9.2% during the 2012-2013 school year

(U.S. Department of Education, 2015). ELL refers to a population whose first language is

not English and who are learning English. This population also makes up a subset of the

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) population which describes individuals and

groups who are not part of the dominant White, European American culture (Olivos,

Ochoa, & Jimenez-Castellanos, 2010). This term is used throughout this document to

describe the population of individuals within the United States who differ from the

dominant culture and includes, but is not limited to, a population whose native language

is not English or who are learning English. Such large numbers of Culturally and

Linguistically Diverse (CLD) students within the schools has left teachers at a loss for

how best to meet their needs. This has led governing institutions to mandate that efforts

be made to provide schools with greater opportunities to work cooperatively with CLD

families and to establish greater connections to these same families (Tellez & Waxman,

2010).

Parents are often unclear as to what ELL programs consist of and are uniformed

about the options they have with regard to educational programming to maximize their

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students' academic potential (Lueck, 2010). To combat this dilemma, the Department of Education's Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Affairs encourages parent education components to programs for ELL students which will inform parents about the different programs available to their students at school. The Department of Education's Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Affairs funds grants to school-wide bilingual and/or ELL programs which utilize innovative approaches to meeting the needs of CLD students (Tellez & Waxman, 2010). To accomplish this, schools are required to educate parents about all program options available to their children to qualify to receive federal grant money for Transitional Bilingual Education programs (Olivos et al., 2012).

The acknowledgment that parents must be educated about program options available to their children led to national policies requiring schools to make efforts to increase parental involvement and participation to support their children socially, emotionally, and academically (U.S. Department of Education, 2002, as cited in Gibbons, 2011, p. 1) regardless of the language they speak. The US Department of Education is advocating for states to equally involve CLD parents in their schools ("IES sifts through English learner research," 2006). As such, pieces of legislation require schools to implement a program to reach out to CLD families and educate them about how to be more involved in their child's education, how to help their children learn English, and succeed in school, and have regular meetings which are guided by parents' suggestions regarding what they would like to learn going forward in order for the schools to receive Title 1 and Title III federal funding (Johnson, Rucker, Coleman-Potter, Miles, & Davidson, 2005). The goal of this mandate is not only to educate parents about American

schools but to empower CLD parents to be greater advocates for their children's education (Chavez-Reyes, n.d.). This information is particularly relevant to parents of ELL students as they often receive instruction through an ELL program whose curriculum or teaching strategies differ from that of the general education curriculum which was designed for a Native English speaking population of students. To further encourage this parental involvement, participation, and education of their rights, it has been mandated that for schools to receive Title I or Title III funding, information must be provided to parents of CLD students enrolled in ELL programs. The recommended method for disseminating this information is through a minimum of four informational meetings educating parents about how they can become involved in the education of their children and how to help their children learn English through "regular meetings", though no specification for how frequently these meetings should be held is provided (Statuatory Authority: No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Title 1, Part A, Sec. 112(g)(1)(A), Title III, Part C, Sec. 3302, and Title IX, Part A, Sec. 9101 as cited in Johnson et al., 2005).

Federal education funding under Title I can be disbursed according to three categories to meet the needs of typically low-achieving students. The first category is intended to meet the needs of students with low reading abilities, not specific to CLD students, and the utilization of local education agencies to assist in meeting the needs of under-performing students; the second category meets the unique educational needs of migratory children, typically CLD students; and the third category meets the needs of ELL students in the areas of English language acquisition, enhancement, and overall academic achievement (Office of State Support, 2015). For these funds to be disbursed,

Section 3302 of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 dictates that parents be notified regarding the reason for placement into specific educational programs such as ELL programs, the instructional methods which will be utilized, how the program is designed to meet their child's needs, how English will be taught to meet academic standards and result in grade promotion/graduation, exit requirements of the program, and their parental rights and ways to be involved in their children's education. To ensure that the necessary information is adequately provided to parents, the "Declaration of Rights for Parents of English Language Learners Under No Child Left Behind" was drafted and can be directly disseminated to parents by school districts (Frudden, President, City, & Montgomery, 2004).

With the formulation of the NCLB Act, an annual grant is awarded to each state based on the number of students identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP) thus qualifying for ELL services. Individual school systems are permitted to apply for sub grants from their state education agency, which, in turn issues a portion of the federally awarded funds to approved school districts ("ELLs benefit under NCLB, but hurdles remain," 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Many of the districts who apply for this funding include a parent education component as a pinnacle aspect of their program (Tellez & Waxman, 2010).These programs enabled schools to increase and encourage communication with parents, which in turn improved the academic outcomes of students and the satisfaction parents had with educators by helping parents to be better informed about their students' education (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Harper & Pelletier, 2010; Wanat, 2010; Wood, Rogers, & Yancey, 2006). Although federally mandated,

these programs have not previously been evaluated, resulting in an uncertainty of the effectiveness of these programs.

Statement of the Problem

The federal government, through the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), as well as state level governments such as the ISBE, require specific programs to establish parent communication and education where Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) programs exists. These programs are intended to improve parental collaboration with schools to make decisions regarding their children's education through increasing their knowledge of school systems and procedures. However, despite the legal mandate for such programs to exist, there is no mandate to monitor their effectiveness.

Purpose of the Study

To comply with the requirement to include a parent program as a component of a TBE program, the district in which this study was conducted created the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) program to work with Spanish-speaking parents in the district. The stated goals of the PAC program were: (1) to educate parents about the educational programs available to their children at school; (2) to empower parents to have more of a voice in making decisions regarding their children's academics; and (3) to increase communication between parents, schools, and the community.

The intended outcomes of this evaluation were intended to reveal whether or not (and to what extent) the PAC program met its stated goals at the time of this study. The results showed how the program educated parents about the procedures of schools and facilitating parental involvement in making decisions regarding the education of their

children. The findings were also intended to reveal trends in attendance rates. In addition to determining whether the program met its goals, this evaluation also illuminated areas for future improvement of this program. On a broader scale, this evaluation was intended to begin, and contribute to, a conversation regarding the utility of requiring districts to implement programs for parents in exchange for Title III, federal funding.

For this evaluation to have fulfilled its intended purposes, a program evaluation utilizing a process and outcome (Organization, 2000) evaluation was utilized. The process evaluation of this study evaluated the integrity with which the program was implemented, parental perceptions of the utility of the program, and with what level of fidelity to the established procedures identified by the program administrators the program was implemented. Using focus group data from parents, survey data from parents, administrator interviews, and records collected from the program administrators, this process evaluation analyzed whether or not this program operated as advertised. The outcome evaluation of this study determined the extent to which the program was accomplishing its goals of educating parents about the various educational programs available to their students within school (Transitional Bilingual Education, English Language Learning, and special education) and empowering parents to assist in the decision making process for their children's education. To accomplish this outcome evaluation, data was collected via parent focus groups, parent surveys, administrator interviews, district teacher surveys, and documents maintained by program administrators.

Case Selection

In preparation for this study, the researcher sought a program aimed at helping parents of CLD students to better understand school district policies and procedures. Having worked with CLD students and families previously, she realized the importance of having programs to help CLD parents navigate school districts. This realization of program needs, coupled with a state mandate of having such a program to receive funding for transitional bilingual education programs, led the researcher to seek such a program to evaluate its effectiveness in hopes of helping other school districts to create effective programs to assist their CLD families.

The researcher spent two days per week during the 2011-2012 and 2013-2014 school years and one day per week during the 2014-2015 school year, working with school psychologists in four of the schools of this district as a practicum student, providing school psychology services under supervision as part of her graduate training in school psychology. During this time, she was introduced to the program administrators of the PAC program and became familiar with the goals of this program. The program goals being in line with the researcher's desires for her dissertation study led to her pursuance of evaluating this program for the present study. Although the researcher was previously affiliated with the district prior to this dissertation study, the researcher's previous affiliation did not impact the results of this study given that through her work within the district she interacted minimally with parents and did not have direct interaction with the PAC program. Similarly, the few staff members whom the researcher

established connections with had prior investment in the PAC program that the researcher did not influence.

Significance of the Study

To optimize the educational outcomes of students, educational programs are evaluated for effectiveness. Programs designed to educate parents of non-natively English speaking students about American school programs, procedures, and expectations are intended to support students at increased risk for academic failure in school. However, evaluation of these programs in terms of whether parents become better informed and involved in the American school system as a result of the programs is lacking.

This evaluation will help to fill a need in the existing research about the effectiveness of educational programing for parents of CLD students. Through this evaluation, the need for further investigation in this area will become evident and inform additional research to be conducted on this topic.

Research Questions

The following questions were answered through this study:

1. Is the PAC program delivered with integrity?

2. To what extent is the PAC program accomplishing its established goals of informing parents about the academic programs available to their students in school, educating parents about areas of concern they have with regard to their children, and facilitating better home-school-community relations?

3. Are parent perceptions of the PAC program influencing the program's delivery?

4. How do teachers perceive the PAC program's influence within their classrooms?

Procedures

For this evaluation to fulfill its intended purposes, a program evaluation utilizing a process and outcome evaluation was conducted. The process evaluation of this study evaluated how well the program was implemented, parental perceptions of the utility of the program, and with what level of fidelity to the established procedures laid out by the program administrators the program was implemented. To address the process evaluation research question of how the program was conducted, the researcher conducted focus groups with parents participating in the PAC program to determine how parents perceived the program; collected surveys from parents regarding their perceptions of individual program sessions; conducted individual interviews with program administrators to determine how the program was planned, evolved, and was implemented; and conducted a document analysis of data collected by the program administrators, including attendance records, to analyze how data collected previously had been used or if it had been used, to make adjustments to the program.

The findings of this outcome evaluation determined the extent to which the program has accomplished its goals of educating parents about the various educational programs available to their students within school (Transitional Bilingual Education, English Language Learning, and special education) and empowering parents to assist in the decision making process for their children's education. To address the outcome evaluation questions of this study, the researcher conducted focus groups with parents, collected surveys, conducted an interview, and analyzed documents kept by the PAC

program. The focus group included parents participating in the PAC program. The researcher administered surveys measuring parent perceptions of how well the presentations met their expectations and its utility to parents following PAC presentations. She also conducted interviews with each of the program administrator. In addition, she administered a survey to teachers in the district to learn more about their perceptions of the program with regard to its goal of establishing better communication with parents. Lastly, she conducted a document analysis of records kept by the program administrators.

Limitations of the Study

Despite careful consideration and planning, this evaluation has limitations. The greatest limitation to this study is its size, which limited the generalizability of the evaluation. Although the Spanish-speaking parent population of the district this study was conducted in is large, only a small portion of these parents attend the PAC meetings. It was from this small portion of the population that participants were recruited for this evaluation. Furthermore, this population of parents is predominantly of Mexican descent. As such, the results of this evaluation can only be generalized to similar districts that intend to create or adjust a program for Spanish-speaking parents. Although the results of this evaluation can only be directly generalized to similar programs, the results could have implications for other populations of CLD groups.

Another limitation to this study lay in the researcher's lack of fluency in the Spanish language. As a result, she needed to rely on natively-Spanish speaking, graduate student, research assistants to translate documents to be provided to parents, as well as to

verbally translate during the recruitment of participants and in person communications

with parent participants. As a result, the researcher could not be certain information was

being translated with all meaning and intent accurately conveyed. Further, given the

small number of parents who attended the PAC meetings regularly, it is possible that they

felt unintentionally pressured to participate in the study. To minimize this concern,

translators were trained by the researcher and the researcher was present at every session

with parent participants when translators were utilized. The translators conveyed the

message that there would be no repercussions for not participating in this research study

and that all participation is voluntary. The research assistant translator translated the pre-

discussed message from the researcher in a culturally sensitive manner providing

opportunities for the potential research participants to ask as many questions as they need

to fully understand what participation in this research study entails.

Notwithstanding these limitations, this evaluation has utility for this PAC

program, as well as other similar programs in like school districts seeking to create or

modify their parental programs.

Definition of Terms

Throughout this evaluation study, the following terms were used:

PAC (The Parent Advisory Council): A program for Spanish-speaking parents of

a large suburban school district in a Midwestern state of the United States. This program

meets monthly during the school year to present a variety of topics to parents relevant to

the parenting of their children.

CLD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse): Individuals and groups who are not part of the dominant White, European American culture (Olivos et al., 2010). This is the preferred term of the researcher for a population also commonly referred to as "bilingual," "minority," "ESL," or "non-English speaking."

TBE (Transitional Bilingual Education): A common program model in schools to educate students who do not natively speak English. These programs allow for content instruction to be delivered in the native-language of the students while acquiring the English language.

ELL (English Language Learners): Also commonly referred to as "ESL" or "English as a Second Language." ELL includes all individuals who are learning English regardless of the number of languages they fluently speak. In schools, ELL often refers to programs geared toward educating students whose native language is not English using English-only instruction.

LEP (Limited English Proficient): The legal classification for students enrolled in TBE or ELL programming in schools. When students are identified as speaking a language other than English at home, an evaluation must take place to determine their level of English language proficiency to determine what programing is best to facilitate their academic progress.

NCLB (No Child Left Behind): This educational act, which was enacted in 2001, is characterized by high-stakes testing to bring all students to grade-level performance regardless of disability, English language acquisition level, or socio-economic level. Specific to CLD students, Title III of NCLB makes funding available to school districts

who provide informational programing to CLD parents regarding educational

programming for their children (specifically TBE or ELL and special education) to

educate CLD students.

Summary

The population of ELL students is growing in the United States school system and

with it, the need to cultivate measures to foster parental involvement in schools. As a

result, the federal government dictates the inclusion of a parental education component to

district bilingual educational programming to receive federal grants for these programs.

The goal of these educational programs is to increase parental involvement in the

education of their children through a better understanding of available educational

programs and how they, and American schools, operate. However, the effectiveness of

these programs has not been determined. This evaluation was intended to start to close

the gap in the research surrounding these programs and to initiate further investigation of

this topic.

Organization of the Study

The following study was divided into five chapters. The first of the five chapters

provides an overview of the study. Included in this chapter are the purpose of the study,

its significance, the research questions that guide the study, the projected limitations of

the study, and terms that will be used throughout the study.

The second chapter provides an in-depth review of the literature existing on this

topic. This chapter explores who this study is intended to work with and evaluate, the

changing demographics of schools, the needs of ELL students in schools, the benefit of

parental involvement in schools to their student's education, the need for cultural

considerations surrounding parental involvement in schools, ways schools can support

CLD families and students, legal issues surrounding the program, a summary of other

similar existing programs, and the purpose of this study.

The third chapter provides an explicit and detailed explanation of the intended

methodology for this study. This chapter expands on the intended purpose of this study,

the methods and the explicit procedures that were used to collect data for this study, and

how these data would be analyzed following its collection.

The fourth chapter provides a record of the results of the analyzed data collected,

as outlined in the third chapter. The chapter illustrates how the collective data yields

responses to the posed research questions of chapter three.

The final chapter interprets the results of the data presented in the fourth chapter.

These interpretations lead to conclusions used to provide answers to the posed questions

of chapter three. This chapter also articulates the limitations of this study in greater detail.

Finally, it provides recommendations both to the PAC program and to the greater

research community for future research in this area.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Definition of English Language Learner (ELL)

Students whose English has not developed to the point that they can fully access academic content taught in English have historically been considered English Language Leaners (ELL). ELL students are not all represented by students who were born outside of the country or whose parents were born outside of the United States; however, all ELL students possess the common characteristic of being exposed to a language at home other than English (Vera et al., 2012). According to Capps, Fix, Murray, Ost, Passel, and Hewantoro (2005), and Garcia and Cuellar (2006), many parents of ELL students have lower levels of formal education and often have lower-income levels than their non-ELL counterparts (Vera et al., 2012). As indicated by Jensen, these factors often lead to lower academic outcomes for ELL students, such as starting elementary school less prepared, being more likely to experience school failure and retention, being more likely to be suspended or expelled from school, and being more likely to drop out of school before reaching graduation than their non-ELL peers (Donnell & Kirkner, 2014; Vera et al., 2012).

Definition of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD)

The term Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) is a broad term for diverse individuals. It includes the population of students and families who are identified as

English Language Learners (ELL), students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP),

native English language speakers, dialect speakers, and students who are learning English

as a Second Language (ESL) (Scott, Hauerwas, & Brown, 2014). Not all students who

are considered CLD require direct English Language Development (ELD) instruction at

school, as the term CLD refers to students with diverse backgrounds who are enrolled in

mainstream English classes with no supplemental support and also those who are enrolled

in ESL/bilingual education classes (Li, 2013). CLD students are comprised of ELL

students, as well as students whose native language is English but whose family and

background is diverse and differs from the majority population of students. This study

focuses on CLD families. As a result, ELL families will be discussed as a portion of the

CLD population.

School ELL Demographics

The demographics of the United States are ever changing. The 2010 United States

Census reported 12.9% of the population was made up of foreign born persons, 20.5% of

the population did not speak English at home (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2013).

According to Kohler, Lazzarin, and Perea, the United States no longer has an ethnic

majority group, and the Latino population is the largest and fastest growing minority

group of the nation (Good, Masewicz, & Vogel, 2010; Ochoa & Rhodes, 2005). The

2000 census reported that although 10% of the population at the time natively spoke a

language other than English, it projected that by 2025, 40% of the population would be

comprised of CLD students (Seo & Hoover, 2009).

During the ten years between 1990 and 2000, the number of students considered to be ELL in the United States public school system increased from 2.2 million to 4.4 million (Allen & Franklin, 2002). As a result of the demographics of the nation changing, the student population within the public schools of the country is diversifying. As researched by Kindler (2002), the population of the ELL student community comprises only approximately 8% (Ochoa & Rhodes, 2005) of the students in the United States. The population of ELL students is the largest growing group within the schools of the United States, growing by nearly 10% each year (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; "ELLs benefit under NCLB, but hurdles remain," 2007). With 70% of the nation's ELL students enrolled in 10% of the elementary schools, resulting in nearly half of the student populations of these schools being comprised of ELL students (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008).

Specific Needs for ELL Students in Schools

All students attend school to receive academic instruction from trained professionals. According to Brooks, Adams, and Morita-Mullaney (2010), ELL students attend school and receive instruction to address academic, cognitive, and English language development needs from teachers and paraprofessionals. With a large percentage of ELL students being from first- and second-generation immigrant families, school professionals must recognize that many of these students and families are unfamiliar with the American school system and require academic as well as mental health supports to navigate these schools effectively (Ochoa & Rhodes, 2005).

A compounding factor facing many ELL students is that many ELL students mostly live in lower SES and urban environments which can result in their education occurring in more difficult teaching contexts with teachers who do not feel confident in their abilities (Durgunoğlu & Hughes, 2010). As a result, the needs of ELL students may be unmet, as teachers may focus on addressing the needs they feel competent to meet: solely academics taught in English (Durgunoğlu & Hughes, 2010).

Strategies for Educating ELL Students

With a growing population of ELL students within the United States, schools are faced with educating these students with unique needs. A greater percentage of CLD students, which are primarily made up of Mexican-American students in the United States (Tellez & Waxman, 2010), than natively English speaking students do not complete high school. In particular, as many as 28.6% of Hispanic students, compared to 7.3 % of Caucasian students, in 2000 did not graduate from high school (Harper & Pelletier, 2010). To avoid academic failure for these students, specially-trained professionals familiar with educating CLD students and effective strategies for educating ELL students are necessary.

Strategies for teaching language, such as using manipulatives to move the abstract to being more concrete, using visuals, and the use of activities to build vocabulary and background and to make learning active have been found to be effective for ELL students (Garza, Kennedy, & Arreguín-Anderson, 2014; Spring, Hite, & Evans, 2006). The use of role playing or dramatization, use of gestures or body language, interactive lessons, and the use of music has proven to lower anxiety and fear about learning and increase student

engagement in lessons (Garza et al., 2014). Other strategies proven effective in supporting ELL students consist of allowing/encouraging the use of native languages, scaffolding learning, building vocabulary and background, using active learning strategies, providing opportunities for student interaction, incorporating home cultures into the classroom, using language that is accessible to students (Spring et al., 2006).

Through providing students with peer interaction opportunities, teachers allow students to use language in authentic and natural ways. Further, ELL students are provided with appropriate language models which demonstrate how language should sound at their developmental level (Garza et al., 2014; Spring et al., 2006). Teachers are able to provide these interactive opportunities through facilitating partnered interactions or small-group instruction (Spring et al., 2006).

Additionally, effective teachers use both the native language of the student and English to support students in accessing academic content, even when they do not know the native language (Spring et al., 2006). The use of the student's native language allows concepts to develop more concretely and for students to access "funds of knowledge" or draw on their prior experiences in a way that is more challenging when they are expected to only use English.

Parental Involvement and Student Education

Another strategy proven to be effective in educating ELL students, is through reaching out to parents and helping parents to be a part of their children's education (Spring et al., 2006). Parents play a vital role in supporting their children in schools, and parental involvement has been shown to increase cognitive and emotional development,

motivation, time spent doing homework, and student success in general (Harper &

Pelletier, 2010; Patel & Stevens, 2010). Parental involvement in the education of students

promotes enhanced academic, social, and emotional outcomes for students, specifically in

the areas of work completion, attendance, academic engagement, grades, test scores,

attitudes toward school, self-concept, and behavior (Henderson & Annenberg Institute

Research Staff, n.d.; Manz, Mautone, & Martin, 2009; Tellez & Waxman, 2010). These

positive educational outcomes lend to the findings that parental involvement in student

education is connected to children's increased cognitive and emotional development,

motivation, and overall success (Harper & Pelletier, 2010). Further, students whose

parents hold higher academic achievement expectations have greater academic success

than those whose parents do not clearly define their expectations (Tellez & Waxman,

2010). Finally, positive educational outcomes also support public school policies and

federal law in emphasizing the importance of involving parents into the educational

process for their children (Waterman, 2007).

<div align="center">**Cultural Considerations for Parental Involvement**</div>

Global Expectations for Parental Involvement in Schools

Around the world, the educational expectations that parents hold of schools

varies. In many countries, it is the expectation that parents educate children about values

and proper behavior, ensure attendance at school, and support their children financially to

allow their access to a purely academic education at school (Arias & Morillo-Campbell,

2008). For example, Latino parents often feel that it is their responsibility is to provide

students with an education in morality and contributing to the well-being of their families

at home, while schools are solely responsible for students' academic education (Good et al., 2010). Further, in many cultures, parents do not have a role in the academic education of their children and therefore do not feel comfortable questioning the practices of educators or being involved at school (Gordon, 1996). For parents coming from countries with these expectations, it can be difficult to bridge the gap and to adapt to the expectations of American schools that hold the expectation that parents be physically present at school, actively participate on parent organizations, communicate with educators in person through conferences, and play an active role in the academic education of their children through assisting with homework (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). As such, the definition of success may differ between teachers and CLD families (Biscoe, 2010).

In some cases, parents are reluctant to cross over into the domain of schools and therefore do not like to interfere with academic lessons being taught. Rather, they prefer to defer to educators who, in many countries, dictate educational decisions for children without the consultation of parents (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Borrero, Exposito, Del Rosario Barillas, & Dyer, 2009; Gordon, 1996). This can lead to miscommunication between parents and educators of American schools who perceive this deference as parental misunderstanding of recommendations or actions taken by schools (Hardin, Mereoiu, Hung, & Roach-Scott, 2009).

Parental Expectations Among United States Schools

These miscommunications also result from the assumption made by school staff that parents know the roles that American schools expect parents to fulfill regarding the

education of their children. Some roles that educators expect parents to fill are aiding

with homework or being involved at schools and with activities (Riojas-Cortez & Flores,

2009). This involvement is not limited to volunteering in their children's classrooms or

assisting with homework but extends to engaging in written or verbal communication

with educators regularly (Harper & Pelletier, 2010). Schools expect parents to

meaningfully participate in the decision making process for their children and expect

parents to be knowledgeable of their expectations of how to do so.

Barriers to Parental Involvement in Schools and Their Negative Consequences

To facilitate or enhance parental involvement of CLD parents, cultural differences

must be considered as well as the obstacles and barriers faced by parents which prevent

school involvement and the resulting impact. All parents are entitled to a contributing

voice in the educational decision making process for their children. However, when

parents are unaware of these rights or unfamiliar with the expectations and routines of the

American school system, they do not fulfill or are denied their role in this educational

decision making process (Olivos et al., 2012).

A contributing factor to parents being uninformed or unfamiliar with the

expectations of the American school system is the lack of communication between

schools and parents. In a study by Patel and Stevens (2010), 50% of natively English

speaking parents reported receiving personal notes or emails about their students'

progress compared to 40% of Spanish speaking parents. Newsletters or other school

notices were addressed to 92% of English speaking parents compared to 82% of Spanish

speaking parents, and invitations were extended to more English speaking parents than

Spanish speaking parents to attend general meetings (97% vs. 89%) and other school events (78% vs. 65%). A key element to students making progress at school is ensuring that parents feel part of their student's education through outreach ("Tips to create successful ELL programs," 2011) and as Patel and Stevens (2010) found, Spanish speaking parents receive less outreach from schools than their English-speaking counterparts. A lack of communication with educators or less frequent communication than that received by their natively English-speaking peers can perpetuate parental unfamiliarity with American school systems.

Chen and Harris (2009) and Laosa (2003) explained that in addition to misunderstandings regarding the role of parents at school, language barriers can also result in ineffective communication and collaboration between the schools and families regarding the expectations for parental involvement and roles. These missed attempts to communicate and collaborate, in turn, negatively affects the academic outcomes of students (Previdi, Belfrage, & Hu, 2005). Therefore, when a CLD student does not succeed in school, the blame is often placed on his parents (Waterman, 2007). Further, CLD parents often feel disempowered to assist their children in their academic pursuits due to language barriers, despite an understanding of the significance this can hold to their students' success (Panferov, 2010). The result of these misunderstandings and miscommunications is parents feeling unheard by the school when attempts are made to provide input regarding their children's education (Good et al., 2010). Unfortunately, the misconception that parents do not have a role within schools often earns parents the reputation of being a liability to their students' education.

Furthermore, CLD families are often placed in a subordinate position at school. This position, along with their lack of English proficiency and view of parents as being a liability to their students' education, interfere with their collaboration with schools regarding the education of their children (Olivos et al., 2012; Wood et al., 2006). Even when this subordinate position is not overtly imposed by the school, CLD parents often feel this prejudice in other facets of their life due to unfamiliarity with American culture, unequal pay at work, and poor working conditions leading to their perception of this unequal power dynamic as being present in all areas of their lives (Good et al., 2010).

When dealing with schools, CLD parents typically feel this prejudice through ineffectual communications with teachers and other school officials. The unequal power dynamic between teachers and parents, in addition to language barriers in some cases, limits effective communication. Communication is also inhibited by parents having limited access to transportation, demanding work schedules which conflict with school hours, limited child care, family responsibilities, and limited access to translation services provided by either the school or by trusted bilingual acquaintances (Barrera & Liu, 2006). These conditions, along with the emotional challenges that come along with moving to a new country and living in an unfamiliar culture, such as stress and anxiety, leave many CLD parents feeling isolated and prone to miscommunication, misunderstanding, and mistrust (Good et al., 2010; Olivos et al., 2012).

These barriers to communication and miscommunications often leave parents being unfamiliar with their rights and expectations of how to be involved in their children's education. As a result, these parents often do not attend scheduled meetings to

make decisions for the educational progress of their children which further impairs the parent-school relationship (Minnema, Thurlow, VanGetson, & Jimenez, 2006). Even if one or both parents speak English, ELL parents often lack this understanding which leaves their children in a vulnerable position leading to lesser academic outcomes (Chavez-Reyes, n.d.). Being unfamiliar with the expectations of American schools or being uneducated prevents parents from knowing what skills to emphasize when assisting their children (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Langdon, 2008; Panferov, 2010). This uncertainty is compounded by not knowing where to obtain information to assist their children or what academic programs are available to their children (Barrera & Liu, 2006; Olivos et al., 2012). In attempting to overcome these barriers, the greatest of which is learning to navigate the waters of American public schools, parents report feeling a loss of their own cultural identity and foundation. This loss in turn often results in a feeling of loss of control (Chavez-Reyes, n.d.; Good et al., 2010) and a view of school professionals as being unsupportive and unhelpful ultimately leading, for many, to feelings of anger or helplessness (Olivos et al., 2012).

Solutions to Barriers Faced by CLD Parents

The barriers to parental communication with schools and involvement in their students' education are not easily remedied. However, schools must make attempts to ameliorate these conditions to improve the academic outcomes of students. To enable parental outreach, resource materials and curricula highlighting parental strengths have begun to be created to encourage parents to identify and problem solve solutions to issues regarding their children's education in culturally appropriate ways (Gordon, 1996). To

mitigate miscommunications between schools and parents and to enhance uninhibited communication between parties, culturally sensitive and respectful resources should be made available to families to aid support of their children (Hirsto, 2010). These resources are intended to provide parents with developmentally appropriate suggestions to help parents acquire strategies to meet the educational needs of their children.

Additionally, efforts must be made beyond supplying literature to parents to ensure parents have a voice at school. Rather, interaction beyond informing parents through paper notifications regarding expectations of how to help student's academic achievement is the most effective way to communicate and collaborate with families (Chen & Harris, 2009).

Parental Support of Children in Schools in the United States

Despite feelings of loss and helplessness as a result of lacking communication from schools, parents make efforts to support their children in ways that are familiar to them. Parents are often involved in their children's education in ways that are traditional for their culture and may not be known or viewed by the educator (Harper & Pelletier, 2010). These traditional methods, although demonstrating effort on behalf of parents, may not meet the needs of students to foster progress in the long-term (Chavez-Reyes, n.d.). CLD parents, like natively English- speaking parents, have an interest in supporting their children's education. Education is viewed as a tool to success, and therefore highly valued, which is supported by teachers who recognize the equal role of CLD parents in their students' education (Harper & Pelletier, 2010). However, in addition to academic learning to form a well-educated and complete individual, many CLD parents view their

role in educating their children is to provide them with an education in morality

(Levinson et al., 2007; Patel & Stevens, 2010).

Parents who are familiar with the expectations of American schools are more

likely to be active in the schools through Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), attendance

of school activities, and consistent communication with educators regarding their

children's education at traditional times such as parent teacher conferences. Conversely,

parents who are unfamiliar with these traditional American school practices or who view

these practices as irrelevant, intimidating, or uncomfortable will not engage with schools

in a similar or consistent manner (Cline & Necochea, 2004).

Cultural Considerations to Parental Collaboration with Schools

It is important, however, for schools to not confuse a parent's lack of familiarity

with the English language with a lack of desire to be involved in their child's education.

Nor should schools predict a parent's involvement in school activities based upon their

English language abilities (Patel & Stevens, 2010). In reality, regardless of the language

spoken at home, most parents value student success in school and want to do what they

can to promote success (Waterman, 2007). The lack of familiarity with American school

systems, operations, and utilization of ineffective educational strategies to support

students is especially prevalent with CLD families, many of whom are from first-and

second- generation immigrant families.

In many cases, CLD parents have a desire to be involved in their children's

education; however, they are unaware of how to be involved and feel as though they are

unable to be involved (Langdon, 2008). The communication gap between parents and

schools is widened by the fact that children acculturate more rapidly than their parents (Gordon, 1996). Therefore, interaction between educators and parents is influenced by the interaction between educators and the more acculturated and more linguistically advanced students with whom they work every day. The interactions between teachers and students can lead educators to overlook the fact that CLD parental educational beliefs may differ greatly from those of natively English-speaking parents. As is often the case, teachers do not speak the same language as CLD parents or their children, and this can lead to feelings of frustration and discomfort in communicating, as well as distrust that their culture will be respected and integrated into the classroom (Good et al., 2010).

How Teachers and Schools Can Improve Interactions with CLD Families

To recognize the ways CLD parents are invested and involved in their children's education, teachers must be familiar with, and open to, the differences between working with CLD families and non- CLD families. Many researchers, including Linn (2003), Abedi and Dietal (2004), Kindler (2002), Kohler and Lazarin (2007), Lee (2002), and Viadero (2001) recognize that despite the ever growing population of CLD students in schools and the No Child Left Behind Act mandate that all children must have achieved grade-level proficiency by 2014 (Good et al., 2010), states (with the exception of Florida, California, and New York) do not usually require pre-service training for teachers in how to meet the needs of CLD students (Allen & Franklin, 2002). Regardless of training, teachers across the country find themselves entrusted with meeting the needs of CLD students alongside non-CLD students. Teachers across grade levels agree that parental involvement can help teachers to become more effective in educating their students (Patel

& Stevens, 2010). To effectively increase parental involvement and to educate parents about strategies to use with their children, all parents must be included and feel welcome. To accomplish this goal, schools are developing programming for parents with the intention of educating parents about schools in the United States as a means to increase their comfort in these schools and their communication with staff members (Wood et al., 2006).

The ultimate goal of educational programming and efforts made between schools and home is to improve the educational outcomes of students, particularly those considered at-risk for academic failure such as students who come from CLD homes. A component of this programming is to include and collaborate with parents, as informed parental input is important to students receiving quality education (Guo & Mohan, 2008). With programs to bridge the cultural divide between the home and school, the hope is that parents will become more invested in their children's education as they learn more about schools in the United States (Wood et al., 2006). This may in turn improve their student's resiliency, as parental involvement, student self-motivation, and student self-esteem are perceived to be the major factors contributing to resiliency and success in school (Padron, Waxman, Brown, & Powers, 2000).

Educate Parents About School Procedures

Programs created by schools for CLD parents often focus on how American schools operate and the educational programs available to parents and students (e.g., bilingual education, special education, etc.) (Ochoa & Rhodes, 2005). They provide parents with information and provide an opportunity for questions to be answered. One

such program revealed the skills learned in this program translated to greater supports provided to students at home and greater parent confidence in communicating with school officials to obtain and provide information regarding their children's progress (Gordon, 1996). Further, the effects of such programs and strong collaborative partnerships between schools and homes have led to documented positive social and academic results for children (Harper & Pelletier, 2010). However, simply educating parents about American schools does not immediately lead to their satisfaction with the school as a system or as a collaborative entity. Schools must include parents into their school community, as the involvement parents have with a school determines how satisfied they become with the school as a collaborative partner in educating their children (Wanat, 2010). In a study about effective parental inclusion into schools, Wanat discovered that satisfied parents frequently discussed the direct contact they have had with schools, the frequency of dialogue with teachers regarding their children's performance in schools, and their involvement both within the classroom as a volunteer and on committees and programs at school. This same study showed that parents who were satisfied with the communication between themselves and their children's school and who felt comfortable with the school were comfortable approaching teachers and initiating communication regarding their children's progress in the classroom.

How to Help Students Progress

It is important that parents are informed about their children's performance in the classroom to be able to use this knowledge to support their children at home ("To boost ELLs' progress, bring their parents to class," 2008). Given the expectation that parents be

involved in assisting with assignments at home and that they be knowledgeable of

classroom activities to effectively aid children at home, it is important that parents be

well informed by educators of school activities and student performance. Unfortunately,

as students progress through school, communication between parents and teachers

diminishes as a natural result of the responsibility of education gradually transferring to

the student and away from their parents. Therefore, by the time students reach middle

school, the information regarding student expectations and expectations of parents

becomes more limited (Patel & Stevens, 2010), despite research supporting stronger,

more collaborative relationships between parents and educators as leading to greater

student outcomes (Harper & Pelletier, 2010).

Establishing Strong Communication Between Parents and Schools

Many parents want to assist their children with homework assignments at home

but are often uncertain of how to effectively do so. In addition to educating parents about

American school systems and opportunities available to them through the schools,

educational facilities hoping to improve relationships with CLD parents would be wise to

also educate parents about effective homework assistance strategies and provide support

in academic content (Good et al., 2010). Schools that have employed regular,

multimodal, multilingual communications to CLD parents to help them navigate the

unfamiliar waters of American schools effectively foster positive home-school

collaboration more so than those that do not (Panferov, 2010). As not all parents are

readily informed of how they should assist in the education of their children and what is

expected of them by educators, educators who directly prompt parents in how to be best

involved with their children and school receive better results (Patel & Stevens, 2010).

This does not indicate a need for educators to train parents to become teachers themselves

to best meet the needs of their children (Riojas-Cortez & Flores, 2009). Rather, providing

formal strategies to parents to support their ability to support their children's needs at

home can foster greater engagement of parents in their children's education (Hirsto,

2010). Due to the hesitation of some parents to initiate conversations out of fear of

miscommunication or their ignorance being revealed, it is important that schools initiate

this communication, or at least have programs for parents to learn more about American

schools (Allen, 2002; Wood et al., 2006). Research cautions educators to recognize that

students acculturate more quickly than their parents; therefore, communications between

educators, students, and families may require differing levels of cultural as well as

linguistic supports (Gordon, 1996). Most commonly, educators initiate conversations

with parents over the phone, during parent-teacher conferences, open houses, written

notes home, or in an informal meeting at school when negative issues arise at school with

their children (Minnema et al., 2006).

Finally, for schools to effectively work with students, they must have a clear

understanding of their students' homes, as the home acts as the first educational

environment of students (Hirsto, 2010). A clear understanding of the home environment

of students informs teachers of students' beliefs, attitudes, and, at times, the academics

students have been exposed to in their first educational environment. These factors can

influence educational approaches used with their students in the classroom (Saracho,

2007). Educators taking an interest in learning about the home lives and cultural

backgrounds of their students and their families leads to the establishment of a strong, collaborative partnership which, in turn, leads to improved academic outcomes for students (Harper & Pelletier, 2010). Learning more about the home environment their students come from provides teachers with tools to be more effective with their students and leads teachers to continue seeking further interactions with parents, creating a more inclusive classroom and school environment (Manz et al., 2009). In addition to making teachers feel more effective in working with their students, this reciprocal learning environment provides social supports that allow parents to feel greater satisfaction with their teacher interactions (Olivos et al., 2012; Wanat, 2010).

Barriers to Communication

To successfully learn about the home lives of students and facilitate these reciprocal learning environments, educators must make an effort to communicate with parents. Efforts to successfully communicate with CLD parents are far more complicated and time consuming than communication with non-CLD parents due to the need for translation both in writing and verbal communication (Biscoe, 2010; Manz et al., 2009). As a result, these efforts are made less frequently than the less complicated communications which occur between natively English speaking parents and educators. Further, the lack of access to interpreters or bilingual professionals force parents with any command of the English language to attempt to communicate without the aid of an interpreter (Barrera & Liu, 2006; Hardin, Mereoiu, Hung, & Roach-Scott, 2009) or to avoid spontaneous communication with school staff for fear of encountering a situation where difficulties communicating require an unavailable interpreter (Barrera & Liu,

2006). When educators do reach out to communicate with CLD families, they often ask

bilingual teachers, paraprofessionals, and community volunteers to perform translation

services (Allen & Franklin, 2002). When unavailable, educators often look to students to

provide translation services to their parents, and this may impede the relationship

between parents and the school by fostering a shift in the parent-child relationship. When

a child is asked to interpret for their parents, a challenge to the parental authority may

take place and prevent parents from sitting down to assist their children with academic

tasks, such as homework, due to a feeling of disempowerment and helplessness

(Panferov, 2010), thus perpetuating a misconception that CLD parents are uninvolved

and uncaring about their children's education.

Language is not the only obstacle parents face with regard to communicating with

school staff. Few educators recognize the social-emotional challenges faced by CLD

parents including anxiety over coping in a new environment, difficulties learning a new

language and furthering their own education, attempting to manage their time and money

when the reality of their circumstances forces them to work long hours for low wages,

and wanting to assist their children in maximizing their potential while attempting to

overcome these obstacles (Borrero et al., 2009; Good et al., 2010). Furthermore,

educators often limit communication with parents through setting communication times,

conferences, at times when parents are unavailable or through not allowing substantial

time for parents to have their questions answered (Manz et al., 2009).

Results of Communication

Through establishing open lines of communication, schools create new ways of respectfully reaching out to families and establishing a collaborative partnership with parents. To facilitate two-way conversations, positive as well as negative information should be communicated between educators and parents (Panferov, 2010). Also through these open lines of communication create newfound knowledge of the families schools aim to collaborate with. This newfound knowledge also leads to an amelioration of the deficit view many schools hold toward CLD parents providing families with an opportunity to demonstrate their strengths and "funds of knowledge" (Chen, Kyle, & Mcintyre, 2008). Success with CLD parents is greatly impacted by a cross-cultural understanding and openness from the school to learning about the home life and cultural background of students and their families (Tellez & Waxman, 2010).

Furthermore, providing resources and facilitating environments to educate parents about the American school system is not only good practice, but mandated for schools to receive Title I and Title III federal funding. These pieces of legislation require schools to implement a program to reach out to CLD families and educate them about how to be more involved in their child education, how to help their children learn English, and succeed in school, and have regular meetings which are guided by parents' suggestions regarding what they would like to learn going forward (Johnson et al., 2005). The goal of this mandate is not only to educate parents about American schools but to empower CLD parents to be greater advocates for their children's education (Chavez-Reyes, n.d.).

Supporting CLD Parents in Schools

Collaboration Between Home and School

The purpose of providing parents with resources to establish communication with the schools is to encourage parental involvement within the schools. The recognition that family involvement has a positive effect on student education and the culture of the school has led to educational policies seeking to strengthen home-school connections (Vannest, Davis, Davis, Mason, & Burke, 2010). As parents become more familiar with and more comfortable with American education, they become more involved in their children's school lives (Wood et al., 2006). To facilitate this comfort, schools should provide opportunities for parents and their cultures, such as classes geared at educating parents about American schools and providing an opportunity for an exchange of ideas and cultures (Gordon, 1996).

Parents are expected to be actively involved in the educational lives of their children in the American school system. In response to this expectation, federal policies have pushed public schools to emphasize the importance of family involvement in the school-based education of children (Waterman, 2007). Many schools have recognized the need for this partnership and collaboration to extend not only to families but to the community at large as well to maximize the educational experience for students at school (Harper & Pelletier, 2010). This collaboration is viewed as advantageous to students by both teachers and families who view the parental involvement as enabling teachers to be more effective with students (Patel & Stevens, 2010). Commonly, teachers maintain that collaboration with parents will enable their understanding of their students to improve

which will, in turn, improve their interactions academically, socially, and behaviorally (Chen, Kyle, & McIntyre, 2008). For this collaboration and involvement to take place, the two groups must be sensitive and respectful of each other and each other's needs.

In response to this need for collaboration and for parents to bridge the gap between home and school, efforts are being made to educate parents about the expectations of the American school system and its available programs (Azzam, 2009). The result of CLD parents becoming more familiar with American school systems and having a better understanding of how American schools function is that they become greater participants in their children's school lives (Wood et al., 2006). Parents becoming greater participants in their children's school lives leads to greater academic, social, and emotional outcomes for students. Additionally, some schools have focused efforts to bring literacy skills for parents to use with students to parents as a means of helping parents to become involved at school (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). Others have focused their efforts in these parental programs to facilitating communication between the school and parents, educating parents about school documents, and providing parents with strategies to assist their children with learning at home (Previdi, Belfrage, & Hu, 2005). It is believed that through more collaboration between schools and families, an overlap in goals and practices will develop to provide students with more common structures, patterns, and expectations which will lead to greater successes (Patel & Stevens, 2010). To accomplish this, parents require more extensive information regarding the services provided at school as well as a deeper understanding of how to work with their children at home (Barrera & Liu, 2006). With a deeper understanding of American

schools and how to work with their children, parents are empowered to initiate communication with schools, become involved in decision making at school, and obtain relevant information regarding their children's progress at school (Gordon, 1996; Previdi et al., 2005; Wood et al., 2006). Further this confidence from being involved in the education of their students can effect parent interactions with their children resulting in improved educational outcomes and supports provided at home (Montgomery, 2009).

Educating parents about policies, procedures, and programs is insufficient to meeting the needs of CLD parents, especially those who are new residents to the United States. The most successful ELL programs include community support to also provide and educate parents about support services in the community (Montgomery, 2008a). The creators of the most successful programs know that educating parents and empowering them to be involved in their children's education should not be an after-thought. Rather, these are components to any program which are essential to aiding families in overcoming cultural barriers and therefore must be well planned and implemented from the beginning (Chavez-Reyes, n.d.). However, it is inaccurate to assume that all CLD parents are ignorant to all aspects of American schooling. Therefore, while program creators are preparing to provide a comprehensive program to parents and to provide them with whatever knowledge of American school policies and procedures they are lacking, they must also learn what parents already know and want to know (Waterman, 2007). To accomplish this end of establishing what parents know prior to educating them in the information they are lacking, community members can be drawn upon to both aid in communication and to provide CLD families with greater community ties and a sense

of partnership within the community-school network through regular meetings (Hill, 2005). This inclusion of community members allows parents to become involved in the education of their children in a broader context than the traditionally viewed methods of parents assisting with homework and attending parent-teacher conferences.

According to Epstein (2001), there are six forms of parental involvement which educational environments should foster amongst their families: parenting (cultivating a home environment which is conducive to becoming successful students, communicating (primarily focusing on the communication between parents and educators), volunteering (focusing on encouraging parents to become more involved at schools by volunteering at school events and activities), learning at home (educating parents in ways to assist students in their academics at home through helping with homework and providing other learning opportunities at home), decision making (including parents in school decision making processes), and collaborating with the community (utilizing community resources to improve school programs, family practices, and academic performance) (Wanat, 2010). To further meet the needs of families and to limit the hindrances to family collaboration with schools, it is suggested that schools create ESL parent committees with bilingual members to collaborate with parents and staff (Guo, 2010). These committees have been shown to increase parent understanding of school expectations (Riojas-Cortez & Flores, 2009).

Existing Programs

In response to the recognized need for programs to educate CLD parents about schools in the United States, school districts across the country have created programs to

address these needs. The Georgia Project, an example of an existing program designed to achieve these ends, collaborates with local businesses and community members to help their CLD families connect to their community and provide parents with opportunities, such as literacy classes, to help build their confidence in assisting in their children's education both at school and at home (Montgomery, 2008b).

In another program, geared toward teaching parents English in addition to educating them about school policies and procedures, participants indicated that this program helped parents and staff to be able to overcome obstacles such as language barriers, lack of familiarity with cultural norms, isolation felt by immigrant parents, and a lack of understanding of school procedures and policies to help parents and schools come together to help students meet their academic potential (Waterman, 2007).

Another program, the Stilthe PACE (Parent and Child ESOL) program in Howard County, Maryland, has worked to facilitate home-school communication, increase parents' understanding of school expectations, provide parents with the competency to help students with their homework, connect parents with community resources, raise community awareness, and introduce children to American customs and etiquette. This program has left parents feeling more comfortable speaking with educators and assisting their children with their schoolwork at home, wanting to attend this program again, wanting to volunteer in schools, attending scheduled parent-teacher conferences, initiating communication with educators, and feeling more comfortable and knowledgeable of school policies and procedures as a result of their attendance (Previdi et al., 2005).

In another example of such a parent committee, sessions were geared toward empowering parents and providing them with information about American culture and schools. During these sessions, parents were able to discuss problems encountered regarding parenting and the education of children. Also during these sessions, information was shared about local resources and English literacy skills were taught to increase proficiency of parents. As a result of these sessions, parents expressed greater abilities in communicating with their children's teachers, assisting their children at home with homework assignments, and communicating directly with school officials to access information about their children's progress in school (Gordon, 1996).

Still another example of exemplary parent committees was created at the Foothill City Middle School in California. This committee created a "learning community" for parents and students together. As a result of the English classes provided to parents three-times per week and supplementary support provided to students before-school, higher than average rates of students being exited from English Language Development (also known as ELL classes) were seen at school ("Action Recommended for California ELLs," 2010).

These programs aim to empower parents to be greater participants in schools through educating parents about the culture of American schools. These forums allow parents to discuss issues relating to parenting both with regard to academics and social issues that arise with their children. During these forums, parents receive advice from their peers and educational professionals as well as community resources which parents are linked with through these programs to address their questions and concerns of

parenting. Ultimately, these programs leave parents feeling more confident, comfortable, competent, and involved in their school community (Gordon, 1996).

Purpose of this Study

Given the importance of collaborating with families to best meet the needs of students and enable their success within and outside of school, initiatives to include parents in various capacities within schools have been established. In particular, the federal government, through the No Child Left Behind Act, as well as state level governments such as the Illinois Board of Education, require that specific programs to establish parent communication be created in districts where Transitional Bilingual Education exist (*Transitional Bilingual Education*, 2010). To comply with this requirement, the district in which this study was conducted created the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) program to work with Spanish-speaking parents in the district. The stated goals of the PAC program are (1) to educate parents about the educational programs available to their children at school; (2) to empower parents to have more of a voice in making decisions regarding their children's academics; and (3) to increase communication between parents, schools, and the community.

With these legal mandates to create parent groups, it is important to evaluate the effectiveness of mandated and established programs. The purpose of this research study was to conduct a process (formative) and outcome (summative) evaluation of the PAC program to determine if this program was meeting its own established goals as well as the goals of federal mandate, to better educate CLD parents about programs and procedures within schools. This research study aimed to examine the effectiveness of such federally

mandated programs to determine their utility in policy through a single case study example. This study is one study aimed at exploring the utility of such national mandates.

The intent is that the results of this research study would be used to improve the program and to extend the program to other culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) populations within the district, such as the Polish speaking population of the district. In addition, the results of this research study may be used to help other school districts establish and/or improve their own programs to facilitate better communication with CLD families. The hope is that this study would also be used to determine the utility of the legal mandate to create such programs to support parents and facilitate collaboration with schools.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The school district in which this research study took place was responsible for educating 4,800 children, in grades Prekindergarten-8, within 11 schools. The remaining 6,525 community students attended the local high school district. The 11 schools in this district consisted of two K-5 schools, one school K-8 school, and two middle schools (Illinois State Board of Education, n.d.)

The geographic area of the town is 14.28 square miles with a population of 58,918 including approximately 77.3% Caucasian, 1.8% African American, 0.6% American Indian and/or Alaska Natives, 11.4% Asian, and 17.2% Hispanic or Latino individuals (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2013). Approximately 41% of the population speaks a language other than English at home. Additionally, 6.2% of the population's annual income placed them below that national poverty level.

Approximately 57% of students within the 11 schools in the district were eligible for free and reduced lunch in 2013, compared to 49.9% of students across the state (Illinois State Board of Education, n.d.). Approximately 18.4% of the school population received special education services, as compared to the state average of 13.6% (Illinois State Board of Education, n.d.).

The racial identities of students who attended this school district were as follows: 43.3% Caucasian (as compared to 50.6% of students at the state level), 4.4% African

American (as compared to 17.6% of students at the state level), 40.2% Hispanic (as compared to 24.1% of students at the state level), 11.2% Asian (as compared to 4.3% of students at the state level), 0.3% American Indian (as compared to 0.3% of students at the state level), and 0.5% Multi Racial/Ethnic (as compared to 3% of students at the state level) (Illinois State Board of Education, n.d.). Approximately, 32.4% of the school population were identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP) (Illinois State Board of Education, n.d.) in the 11 schools, compared to 9.5% at the state level. This entitled 32.4% of the population within these schools to English language supports in the classrooms either in the form of English Language Learning supports or Transitional Bilingual Education that was offered in kindergarten through third grade to Spanish-speaking students, as they represented the majority of these language minority youth.

The school district did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in overall Reading or Math in 2011, 2012, or 2013 (Illinois State Board of Education, n.d.). AYP is determined through annual state-wide testing which measures the performance of students against state-wide academic standards. Overall, LEP students in the school district did not achieve scores on these tests that are considered "proficient" for children of the same age level across the state. As such, the district was identified for "District Improvement" according to the No Child Left Behind Act (Illinois State Board of Education, n.d.).

Recruitment

Recruitment of participants began after receiving university IRB approval to conduct this study. Parent participants were recruited for this research study from the

existing pool of program participants. During two, consecutive, regularly-scheduled program presentations, participants were informed verbally, in Spanish, of the study, its purpose, and how it would be conducted. These attendees were invited to participate in the study. This procedure took place before data collection began. Each participant who consented to take part in this study was contacted verbally through phone calls to be invited to participate in a focus group. Research assistants called each of these parents twice prior to the focus group sessions. Parents were offered three sessions to participate in, across two days. Eight participants consented to attend two of the sessions held on the same day. Six participants attended one session of the focus group, and no participants attended the other scheduled session. Participants who consented to take part in this study were also asked to complete surveys regarding their experiences during these presentations on subsequent meeting dates.

The program administrator participant was recruited directly by the researcher. The program administrator's identity is commonly known to anyone involved in or studying the program, and she can be directly contacted. The researcher contacted the program administrator to schedule an in-person meeting. During the in-person meeting, the researcher informed the program administrator of the research study procedures and goals and asked if she would like to participate through interviews, providing documents for analysis, and opening the program sessions to the researcher for observations, parent recruitment, and survey solicitation.

Teachers were recruited to participate in an anonymous survey through their district email addresses. Every teacher in the district has an electronic address where they

commonly receive notices and information pertinent to their working in the district. The researcher sent the program administrator an introduction to the research study and an electronic link to the actual survey. The program administrator forwarded the information to all of the teachers in the school district. The introduction explained the purpose to the research study and requested their participation within a specified amount of time (one month). A reminder email was sent to the program administrator, and in turn forwarded to the teachers in the district two months, one month, three weeks, two weeks, and one week before the survey closed. These reminder emails also informed teachers about the purpose of the research study.

Prior to the collection of any data, willing participants were asked to provide both written consent and verbal assent to participate in the project (teacher participants were only asked to provide written consent by agreeing to complete their survey). Both the written consent and verbal assent forms provided a description of the project, including its purposes and procedures. Only with both written consent and verbal assent (except in the case of teacher participants where only written consent will be required) did the researcher pursue gathering information from participants (see appendix for consent/assent forms).

The researcher considered that in populations of CLD adults, there was the potential for undocumented individuals. The researcher was introduced to potential participants by the program administrators who were familiar to the families, and assurances were made that only the researcher and research assistant/translator would view the data collected during this study. Further, assurances were made that the results

of the research would be kept confidential - that the identities of the participants would be

protected and their identities would remain private.

Participants

The participants of this study were the Spanish-speaking parents of children who

attended, or had previously attended, the 11 schools in this school district who also attend

PAC program sessions which are delivered in Spanish. Some parent participants attended

the focus group and some attended PAC program presentations. Six participants attended

the parent focus group. Their children ranged in age from 9-16 with a median age of 13.

Some parent participants also completed surveys after two PAC program presentations.

After the first PAC program presentation, five parents completed the survey. These

parents had students attending preschool, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh,

eighth, ninth grades in eight of the eleven schools in this school district. One student also

attended the local high school that students from this school district feed into. The

median grade level that the students of these parent participants attended was fifth grade.

After the second PAC program presentation, five parents completed the survey. One

respondent did not provide demographic information regarding their children. The other

four respondents stated that they had children attending six of the eleven schools in the

school district with one student attending the local high school where students from this

school district feed into. They also stated that they had students attending grades 2, 3, 4,

6, 7, 8, and 9 with a median of fifth grade.

A survey was administered, through staff email accounts, to all teachers working

in the school district where this research study was conducted. As previously described in

Chapter Three, the researcher asked the program administrator of this program to disseminate an email describing the research study and the specific survey with a link to access the internet-based survey. Of the 375 teachers working in the school district, 22 accessed and completed the teacher survey. The demographic information for staff members who completed the teacher survey is displayed in Table 1. The respondents indicated an average number of 15 years of experience with a range of 7-30 years of experience working in education. The staff respondents taught grades ranging from kindergarten to eighth grade, with two respondents stating that they were administrators and therefore did not teach a specific age range. Five of the respondents indicated that they teach ESL/ELL, two stated that they are administrators, one stated teaching English, and one stated that he/she is a special education teacher filling a resource teacher role.

Table 1. Teacher Survey Respondent Demographics

Participant Number	Years of Experience	Current Grades Taught	Current Content Area Taught
Participant 1	25 years	7	ESL/ELL
Participant 2	30 years	6-8	English
Participant 3			
Participant 4			
Participant 5			
Participant 6	8 years	(Not a homeroom teacher)	Administration
Participant 7	7 years	None	
Participant 8			
Participant 9			
Participant 10	15 years	1-4	ESL/ELL
Participant 11	16 years	ELL Resource	ESL/ELL
Participant 12			
Participant 13	10 years	1	Social Studies
Participant 14		Administrator	
Participant 15			
Participant 16		1	
Participant 17	10 years	1-5	ESL/ELL
Participant 18			
Participant 19	13 years	K	Resource
Participant 20			
Participant 21	17 years	K-5	ESL/ELL

There is one administrator of the PAC program whose title within the school district is Director for Second Language Programs. The researcher approached this administrator to recruit her to take part in this research study. She consented to participate in the study and complete the activities requested including participating in an interview with the researcher, providing the researcher with collected documents of the program, and disseminating teacher surveys to the teachers of the district.

The Researcher

The researcher who conducted this evaluation was a graduate student in a school psychology program. Prior to beginning graduate school, she spent two years as a teacher. One of those years was spent teaching students enrolled in the English Language Learning program in a suburban school in Massachusetts. Her position as a teacher to English Language Learners and her intermediate Spanish language skills enabled her efforts to collaborate with their families and to include them into the culture of the school as much as their English-first counterparts. It was through these efforts that she developed a passion for working with these families and making schools more English Language Learner and family friendly.

During graduate school, the researcher completed two of three practicum experiences in three of the elementary schools of the district where this study took place. It was during this time that she became acquainted with the administrator of the PAC program and the program itself. Although the researcher did have a connection to the district, the affiliation did not influence the findings of this evaluation. Her intended goal for this proposed evaluation was to improve the relationships between parents and

schools. This led her to seek a program that worked with Spanish-speaking parents to educate them about school practices and procedures. The discovery of the PAC program in a district where she already had staff connections gave her the opportunity to partner easily with the program. Having become aware of the program, and to ensure that it was suitable for this research study, the researcher attended one session to determine whether or not the PAC program was aligned with the researcher's research goals and appropriate for this program evaluation.

The Research Assistant

Although the researcher for this study possesses intermediate Spanish language skills, it was necessary to recruit a research assistant who speaks Spanish fluently to ensure the accuracy of interpretation. The research assistant recruited for this research study was enrolled in a school psychology PhD at the time of this study. Prior to entering graduate school, the research assistant had engaged in professional work within the research field using both Spanish and English languages.

This research assistant's first language was Spanish, and his family emigrated from Mexico. This research assistant has a similar language background to many of the parents recruited to take part in this research study. This research assistant possesses fluency in both Spanish and English and had acted as a translator for previous research studies the researcher had worked on through their graduate education.

This research assistant did not have previous connections to the school district where this research study took place prior to being recruited to participate in this research study. However, at the time that this study was conducted, he spent two school days each

week engaged in a practicum experience through the graduate program he was enrolled.
This practicum was conducted at one of the high schools in the high school district where
students from the school district where this study was conducted fed into.

Parent Advisory Council (PAC) Program

The Parent Advisory Council (PAC) was created in conjunction with a state and
federal grant geared toward creating greater collaboration with families. If a district has a
Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) program, it was also required to establish a
cooperative relationship with parents and community members who "shall participate in
the planning, operation, and evaluation of programs" (*Transitional Bilingual Education*,
2010). After the establishment of this program, districts were able to apply for
reimbursement for the program from the state to ameliorate any costs incurred with
implementation. To qualify for reimbursement, these parent advisory committees needed
to meet a minimum of four times per year, and the parents should have been involved in
the educational decision-making process for their children through these committees.

In the school district where this research study took place, the committee
meetings were held in Spanish and educate parents about the education systems of
schools, specifically the English Language Learning services (such as the Transitional
Bilingual Education program) and Special Education Services, in addition to other topics
that vary yearly depending on participant interests and needs.

The group met once every month, on a Friday evening, at an elementary school.
On these evenings, the administrators arranged for presentations in Spanish on the
required topics for the grant (ELL services and Special Education services), topics

believed to be beneficial to parents, and on topics the parents had previously indicated

they would like more information about. To address many of the topics the program

administrators believed would benefit parents and that parents indicated an interest in

learning more about (such as substance abuse in teens, gang prevention, suicide/

depression prevention and mental health services, etc.), the administrators partnered with

community resource providers to present information at PAC meetings. These

presentations provided parents with information about the American school system and

its expectations, guidance regarding how they can help their children, information about

where they can go in the community to get further assistance in their native language.

To encourage attendance and participation, the program was conducted on

Thursday evenings, a time when a parent in the family is more likely to be available to

attend and as preferred by parents. Additionally, this program provided a pizza diner,

along with desserts, to both the parent participants and any children they brought along

with them. Following dinner, the parents were taken into a conference room of the school

to participate in interactive presentations with community and district providers while

district volunteers, free of charge, provide childcare and homework support to school

aged children.

Research Design

Through this case study (Yin, 2009), the effectiveness of the PAC program was

evaluated. As is typical in program evaluation, this research study evaluated the

effectiveness of the intended program goals of the PAC program (Stake, 1995). Given the

narrow focus of this study, the PAC program, case study methodology was an appropriate

methodology to evaluate its effectiveness (Yin, 2009). The intent of this mixed methods study was to implement a process and outcome program evaluation to evaluate the following research questions:

1. Is the PAC program delivered with integrity?

2. To what extent is the PAC program accomplishing its established goals of informing parents about the academic programs available to their students in school, educating parents about areas of concern they have with regard to their children, and facilitating better home-school-community relations?

3. Are parent perceptions of the PAC program influencing the program's delivery?

4. How do teachers perceive the PAC program's influence within their classrooms?

The purpose of a process evaluation is to describe and analyze how a program is conceptualized, planned, and implemented (World Health Organization, 2000). Through this process evaluation, the PAC program implementation was analyzed. When conducting a process evaluation, it is important to keep in mind what the program was intended to be, what is delivered in reality, and where the gaps between the program design and delivery are (Bliss & Emshoff, 2002).

An outcome evaluation was intended to evaluate the effectiveness of a program, or how well it is accomplishing its goals. While the process evaluation of this case study analyzed how the program was implemented, the outcome evaluation analyzed whether the PAC program was meeting its end-goals of educating parents about school programs available to their children, empowering parents to have greater influence in their children's education, and to enhance home-school-community relationships. It is

important for any initiative within schools to be evaluated for effectiveness to ensure that the results seen in participants are due to the evaluation and not some competing influence (World Health Organization, 2000).

Instrumentation

To successfully evaluate the PAC program, this study utilized multiple data collection strategies to triangulate data and minimize threats to the validity (Yin, 2009). The process and outcome evaluation instruments used in this study were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the PAC program of meeting its established goals.

The following sources of data were used to address the research questions guiding this study:

Table 2. Sources of Data to Answer Research Questions

Research Question	Data Source to Address Research Question
1. Is the PAC program delivered with integrity?	- Document Analysis - Parent Focus Group - Administrator Interview
2. To what extent is the PAC program accomplishing its established goals of informing parents about the academic programs available to their students in school, educating parents about areas of concern they have with regard to their children, and facilitating better home-school-community relations?	- Document Analysis - Program Attendance Records - Parent Focus Group - Post Presentation Survey - Administrator Interview - Teacher Survey
3. Are parent perceptions of the PAC program influencing the program's delivery?	- Document Analysis - Program Attendance Records - Parent Focus Group - Administrator Interview
4. How do teachers perceive the PAC program's influence within their classrooms?	- Teacher Survey

Process Evaluation

To evaluate how the PAC program was being conducted, qualitative data from records collected from the PAC program, a focus group, and interviews were collected. The process evaluation assessed the procedures of the program sessions and recruitment to determine whether or not PAC procedures were carried out as they were intended – whether or not the presentation itineraries had been tailored to meet the needs of its participants.

Document analysis. Through the document analysis, the researcher evaluated the existing information kept by the PAC program administrators. The researcher used these materials to determine if the implementation of the program was consistent and if it met its goal of using parental input to guide the administration of the program. The researcher reviewed records kept by PAC program administrators. Among these documents, the researcher viewed surveys, which had been administered to parents previously by the program administrators to reveal information from parents regarding their interests for future PAC presentations. The data from these surveys were compared to PAC program itineraries to determine how the PAC program administrators used the data they gathered and whether adjustments to the program had been made accordingly. Similarly, the researcher reviewed communication records such as notices which had been sent through the mail or home with students to their parents to notify parents of program information or phone calls which had been issued to program participants and other district community members, to document the content of the messages as well as the language of the issued messages.

Program attendance records. The researcher intended to analyze attendance records to determine any trends in attendance – whether program attendance had increased or decreased – over time. Also from this data, the researcher intended to analyze these attendance records to determine if the participants in attendance during the PAC presentations were consistent or whether attendance fluctuates. Lastly, the attendance records would be used to gather demographic information from the program participants to analyze any trends within the population of Spanish-speaking participant attendants. However, the researcher did not receive program attendance records from the program administrator. It is possible that the PAC program does not keep attendance records from the PAC presentation nights. It is also possible that these records were not supplied to the researcher, in spite of their being requested, intentionally. Ultimately, the program attendance records were not analyzed because they were not included within the program documents supplied to the researcher.

Parent focus group. To learn more about the perceptions of parents regarding the effectiveness of the PAC program, an audio-recorded focus group was held with participating parents. The parent focus group followed a pre-established list of 12 questions evaluating parental participants' perceptions of the program's utility and implementation. This focus group lasted for approximately one hour and took place in the same venue where PAC presentations take place. The number of focus group sessions was determined by the number of willing parent participants. The focus group engaged exactly six participating parents. Through the parent focus group, the researcher explored the reasons parents chose to attend parent sessions, whether or not they attended

regularly, which sessions they attended and benefitted most from, and how they found

out about the parent sessions. These focus groups were facilitated by a native Spanish

speaker, a paid graduate student research assistant, with the support of the researcher. The

focus groups were audio recorded with the data being uploaded to a secure, computer-

based server that was and is accessible only by the researcher and research assistants/paid

interpreters (see Appendix B for English copy of focus group questions).

  Administrator interview. The researcher conducted an audio-recorded,

individual interview with the program administrator to learn more about the evolution of

the program, the procedures followed to create the yearly program itinerary, and the

procedures followed to ensure participation of participants. The administrator interview

followed a pre-established list of 12 questions to evaluate the perceptions of the

administrator of the PAC program regarding the implementation and utility of the

program. This interview took place in the administrator's office and lasted approximately

45 minutes. The interview was audio-recorded and uploaded to a secure, computer-based

server that was and is only be accessible by the researcher (see Appendix D for copy of

administrator interview questions).

  Also during this interview, the program administrator was asked to facilitate the

distribution of teacher surveys (described below). Specifically, the administrator was

asked to forward emails to the school district teachers, drafted by the researcher, with a

link to a teacher-survey embedded at specific time intervals during this study. The

researcher of this study was not affiliated with the school district this study took place in

and did not have a school district email address with which to issue the survey.

Outcome Evaluation

The outcome evaluation assessed the product of the PAC program-the sense of empowerment felt by families, the resulting understanding of school procedures by parents, enhanced home-school-community relationships, as well as the utility perceived by educators.

Parent focus group. The parent participants were given the opportunity to discuss their perceptions on the effectiveness of the outcome of this program during an audio-recorded focus group (the same focus group as used during the process evaluation). This was not a separate focus group from the 12-question focus group aimed at evaluating parental perceptions of the program's utility and implementation described during the process evaluation. Rather, parent participants attended one focus group to address both process and outcome questions. During this focus group, parents were asked questions relating to their perceptions of the PAC program goals: educating parents about the educational programs available to their children at school; empowering parents to have more of a voice in making decisions regarding their children's academics; and increasing communication between parents, schools, and the community. This focus group was audio recorded and the data were uploaded to a secure, computer-based server that was and is only accessible by the researcher and research assistant/paid interpreter.

Post presentation survey. A seven question (six open-ended response) survey was administered on paper to attendants of two separate PAC presentations following the conclusion of these presentations was used to measure the participants' perceived utility of the program sessions. To compensate participants for completion of these surveys,

participants were given a coupon to a local pizzeria for a pre-paid pizza (see Appendix C for participant post-presentation survey).

Administrator interview. To measure effectiveness of the program from the administrator's perspective, the researcher conducted an audio-recorded interview with the program administrator of the PAC program which lasted approximately 45 minutes in the office of the administrator (the same interview as described in the process evaluation). This interview measured how effective the program administrator perceived the PAC program to be. The 12 question interviews were audio-recorded and uploaded to a secure, computer-based server that was and is only be accessible by the researcher (see Appendix D for administrator interview questions).

This administrator was asked to forward a survey via their school district email account to the teachers of the district at that time. The program researcher of this study was not affiliated with the school district this study took place in and did not have a school district email address with which to issue the survey. The program administrator was asked to use her school district email address, where she has access to all of the teachers' email addresses from the school district to forward emails drafted by the researcher, with a link to a teacher-survey embedded, to school-district teachers at specific time intervals during this study.

Teacher survey. One goal of the PAC program, which was in line with federal and state mandates, was to facilitate parent participation in their children's education. To evaluate the extent to which this program affected parent-school relationships, the researcher used a survey to gain the perspectives of teachers regarding the impact of the

PAC program on their classrooms. To accomplish this aim, a survey was administered

using a secure online server. A link to this survey was emailed to all teaching staff

members of the district in which this research study was conducted. This survey, which

was forwarded by the program administrators from the researcher to district employees,

allowed teachers to anonymously complete these surveys with the intention of learning

more about the teachers' perspectives about the PAC program's influence on their home-

school relationships (see Appendix E for teacher survey). This survey inquired about

teachers' perceptions regarding their interactions with Spanish-speaking parents of their

students and whether their interactions had been influenced by the PAC program. The 10

questions of the survey asked questions which yielded both qualitative (open ended

questions) and quantitative (closed questions) responses.

Procedures

Following recruitment and consent of participants for this study, the researcher

invited the program administrator via email to be interviewed. The researcher met with

the program administrator in her office and audio-recorded the interview. Following the

interview, this information was uploaded to a secure, computer-based server. Following

the administrator interview, the researcher collected program documents from the

program administrator's staff to be used for document analysis. One month following this

interview, the administrator was invited to a second meeting during which time the

researcher discussed the emergent themes yielded from the initial interview as a means of

checking the accuracy of these themes as describing the administrators' statements. The

administrator agreed with the themes that emerged from the original interview.

Each parent participant received an invitation to participate in a focus group. These invitations, which were translated by a natively-Spanish-speaking research assistant, were issued via phone call by a native, Spanish-speaking research assistant to invite them to participate in the focus group session.

The researcher of this study, as well as a paid, native, Spanish-speaking research assistant conducted the focus group. Each participant was provided with a number upon entry to the focus group. To ensure their confidentiality, participants used this number to identify themselves during the session. The researcher uploaded the audio-recording from this focus group to a secure, computer-based server, only accessible to the researcher and paid research assistants. The research assistant translated the audio recording into English then transcribed its contents.

Following two PAC presentations, the researcher issued the paper copies of the post presentation surveys to participants of this study and requested they complete the surveys in exchange for a coupon to a local pizzeria. These surveys were collected by the researcher, and then the responses from participants were translated by the paid research assistant.

Three months prior to the conclusion of this study, the researcher drafted an email with an internet hyperlink to the teacher survey which was forwarded to district teachers via the PAC program administrator. Teachers were provided with the purpose to the research study and a link to an online database where they were able to complete the survey. The program administrator forwarded a reminder, drafted by the researcher, to the district staff members to complete this survey, along with the link to the survey for

them to use, two months, one month, three weeks, two weeks, and one week before the

conclusion of this evaluation. The results of the survey were converted to and analyzed

using a statistical analysis tool. The data from these surveys were and are stored in a

secure, computer-based server that was and is only accessible by the researcher of this

study.

One month following the final PAC presentation observed for this study, the

researcher met with focus group attendants to discuss the emergent themes from their

data to ensure accuracy. The parents agreed that the emergent themes from their data

were accurate.

Table 3. Timeline

Month	Dissertation Activities
March 2015	• Recruited parent participants • Interview with administrator scheduled • Documents for analysis requested
April 2015	• Recruited parent participants • Interview with program administrator • Documents for analysis collected
May 2015	• Focus groups scheduled • Follow up meeting with administrator scheduled
June 2015	• Parents invited to focus group
July 2015	• Focus group held
August 2015	• Data analysis
September 2015	• District administrator forwarded district teacher survey
October 2015	• Post-presentation surveys administered • Follow-up from focus group held • Reminders sent to district teachers to complete survey
November 2015	• Post-presentation surveys administered • District teacher survey closed • Data analysis

December 2015	• Data analysis
January 2016	• Dissertation conclusion drafted
February 2016	• Dissertation conclusion drafted • Final chapters revised
March 2016	• Final chapters revised
April 2016	• Dissertation defense • Scheduled meeting with program administrator to present findings
May 2016	• Findings of study presented to program administrator

Analysis

The aforementioned sources of data yielded qualitative and quantitative

information. The data sources that were analyzed qualitatively included the focus group

conducted with the Spanish-speaking parent participants, the administrator interview,

portions of the post presentation survey, portions of the teacher survey, and the document

analysis. The sources of quantitative data gathered in this research study included

portions of the post presentation surveys, portions of the teacher surveys, and the

attendance records. The table below identifies the data sources that were analyzed

qualitatively and quantitatively during this study.

Table 4. Qualitative and Quantitative Data Sources

Data Source	Qualitative Analysis	Quantitative Analysis
Focus group	X	
Administrator Interview	X	
Document Analysis	X	
Post Presentation Survey	X	X
Teacher Survey	X	X

Data Analysis

The qualitative data, including the focus group, administrator interview, portions of the post presentation survey, portions of the teacher survey, and the document analysis were analyzed using a content analysis methodology (Terry College of Business, 2012). A content analysis consists of the researcher reading through the data to be analyzed and chunking the data into emergent themes then systematically evaluating texts using the coded material. As such, the researcher read each transcript, after it had been translated in the case of the focus group and post presentation survey, multiple times to be sure of full understanding of the intentions of participant responses. General themes were established which led to the development of the codebook for each data source. The research assistant also read the transcripts multiple times to determine agreement of general themes. Both the researcher and research assistant then coded the content of these data sources against the codebook for the respective data source, separately. Coding between the research and the research assistant were compared for discrepancies and discrepancies were compared and discussed until consensus was reached by both parties. The researcher also engaged in member checking with participants of the focus groups and administrator interviews during pre-established meetings to ensure that themes derived from the transcriptions of their previous sessions were accurate to strengthen the validity of this study (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007).

The data collected directly from parent participants in this research study were in Spanish. The researcher's dominant, and first, language is English. Although she has intermediate Spanish language skills that supported her in this project, all data was

transcribed and translated into English by a trained research assistant prior to analysis by the researcher. The research assistant is a native-Spanish speaker and, at the time of this study was enrolled in a school psychology graduate program pursuing a doctoral degree. These transcriptions and translations were completed by the same research assistant who originally translated documents for this study from English into Spanish.

The sources of quantitative data gathered in this research study included portions of the post presentation surveys and portions of the teacher surveys. The quantitative information gathered from these sources was converted into a data file. Using a computer-based data analysis tool, frequency analyses were run to interpret trends in the data from the teacher survey. The post presentation surveys were uploaded into a computer-based statistical analysis program from their paper based original form. The teacher surveys were collected from an internet-based database and converted into the computer-based statistical analysis program. Across each of these sources, the quantitative data determined how frequently across respondents specific responses were found.

For the purposes of accurately evaluating this program, all collected data were interpreted. Participants who responded to the post-presentation survey and teacher survey did not respond to every question contained within the survey. As a result, the analyses of questions do not represent every participant who consented to be part of this study; however, they do represent all of the received responses. Table 5 describes specifies which questions received responses from the post-presentation survey.

Table 5. Responses Received to Post-Presentation Survey

Post-Presentation Survey Question	Number of Responses Received		Number of Responses Missing	
	Session 1	Session 2	Session 1	Session 2
Question 1	5	5	0	0
Question 2	5	4	0	1
Question 3	5	5	0	0
Question 4	4	4	1	1
Question 5	4	3	1	2
Question 6	5	5	0	0
Question 7	5	4	0	1
Question 8	5	4	0	1

Contextualizing the Data Analysis Process

As described in above, responses from multiple data sources were triangulated to answer the four research questions of this study. Given the small effect size of this study, to answer each research question, data from very different sources needed to be combined. As such, the direct content from each data source may not be directly comparable; however, the themes from the data sources can be triangulated to form conclusions. Furthermore, no source was used in entirety to address one research question.
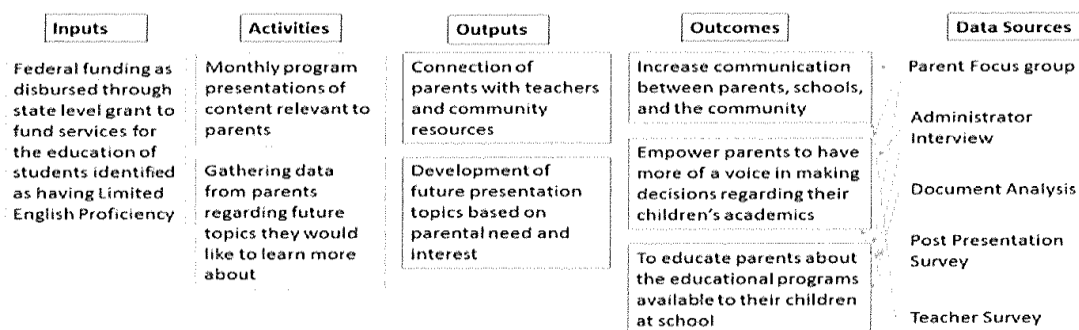
Figure 1. Logic Model

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Chapter Three of this research study presented the use of a process (formative)

and outcome (summative) evaluation within a case study methodology (Yin, 2009) to

determine the effectiveness of the PAC program of meeting its own established goals as

well as the goals of federal mandate to better educate CLD parents about programs and

procedures within schools. Chapter Three also outlined the process of how the data for

this study would be collected and analyzed. Specifically, Chapter Three presented the

method of participant recruitment, procedures for conducting focus groups and interviews

with the program administrator, the method of collecting surveys from district staff

members as well as participants of the PAC program, how data sources would be

gathered, and the description of intended qualitative and quantitative processes for data

analysis.

This chapter presents the results of that data analysis. It describes the common

themes obtained from a content analysis methodology of the administrator interviews,

focus groups, post presentation parent participant surveys, district teacher surveys, and

analyzed documents gathered from program administrators (Leech & Onwuegbuzie,

2007). Also discussed in this chapter are the quantitative analysis results of the post-

presentation surveys administered to program participants, teacher surveys, and analyzed

documents gathered from the program administrators. Table 6 delineates which portions

of each data source were used to answer each research question of this research study.

Table 6. How Data Sources Answered Research Questions

Data Source	Research Question 1	Research Question 2	Research Question 3	Research Question 4
Document Analysis				
Documents	X			
Administrator Interview				
1	X			
2	X	X		
3	X	X		
4	X			
5	X			
6	X		X	
7	X			
8	X			
9		X		
10		X		
Parent Focus Group				
1	X			
2				
3			X	
4		X	X	
5		X	X	
6		X	X	
7		X	X	
8		X	X	
9		X		
10		X		
11		X		
12		X		
13			X	
14		X	X	
15		X	X	
Post Presentation Survey				
1		X		
2		X		
3		X	X	
4		X		
5		X		
6				
7				
8				

Teacher Survey				
1		X		
2		X		X
3		X		X
4		X		X
5				X
6				X
7		X		X
8				
9				
10				

Research Question 1

Research question 1 was, "Is the PAC program delivered with integrity?" To answer this question, the primary researcher of this research study analyzed responses from the administrator interview, one question from the parent focus group, and information gleaned from the document analysis of documents provided to this examiner from the program administrator.

The major themes used to answer the question of "Is the PAC program delivered with integrity" included the following, ordered by the frequency with which they occurred in the data. The themes were derived from analyses of qualitative date from the administrator interview.

▪ Culture – This theme described any mention of culture including understanding the culture, membership of a particular culture, or the importance of including members of a culture to bridge cultural gaps (15 mentions).

▪ Language – This theme described any mention of language as an influencing factor to behavior (14 mentions).

▪ Building Relationships – This theme described mentions of parents establishing a relationship with the building/school (13 mentions).

- Conversation – This theme described parental verbal participation in the PAC program (2 positive statements, 2 negative statements, 8 neutral statements).

- Parent Leadership – This theme described parents taking a leadership role within the administration of the PAC program (10 mentions).

- Parent Determination – This theme described parents determining the topics/content of the PAC program (10 mentions).

- Staff – This theme described the influence of staff members on the PAC program (9 mentions).

- Cultural Boundaries – This theme described any mention of culture as influencing behavior or as a barrier to parental involvement in schools or PAC program (9 mentions).

- Exposure – This theme described mentions of how parents are informed about the program (7 mentions).

- Entertainment – This theme described mentions of the PAC program as a source of entertainment for parents (6 mentions).

- Law Mandate – This theme identified any mention of legal requirements to hold the parent-education program (5 mentions).

Specifically, the program administrator stated that to inform parents of upcoming program sessions and recruit more parents to attend session presentations, the program currently issues a voicemail message, in English and Spanish, to a list of parents who speak Spanish within the home that has been generated by district schools. She indicated that in the past, the program utilized flyers sent home with students and personal phone

calls made by district staff members and parent participants of the program to inform

parents about upcoming sessions. The program administrator stated that following the

realization that letters and flyers did not recruit participants, the administrators

> had the liaisons call, they had a list of who spoke Spanish at the buildings and they would call. And here's the thing, being the culture that's mostly about talking and socializing being like 'did you get the message' 'yeah, we got the message, we're coming!

This evolved into having the voicemail message

> because I don't have to call everybody… Individual calls were nice, but it was a lot of work and time and we didn't want people to use their phones at home because that would cost and so they'd have to come here and borrow our phones and it was throughout the day because we'd have five different people throughout ten schools.

The administrator went on to say that ultimately, "the best thing we could have done was

that [voicemail system]." Both the program administrator and parent focus group

participants stated that the most effective way to notify parents of sessions is through

verbal messages. The parents who participated in the parent focus group described these

messages as being delivered by "word of mouth." This differed from what the program

administrator stated as the best method of disseminating information to parents, though

still included verbal messages. The program administrator described this as the voicemail

system, which also includes a text message to parents because "all of our friends at least

have a smartphone." In contrast to the program administrator's description of the

recruitment process, participants of the parent focus group described this "word-of-

mouth" passage of information as being between participants or directly from school

staff, never mentioning the voicemail or text message left by the schools. Specifically,

there were seven comments made during the parent focus group stating that they learned

about the program sessions through flyers in backpacks, staff members at school, and word of mouth, stating "all of us as neighbors can communicate." Three years of documents kept by the PAC program evidenced program flyers and program schedules to inform parents of upcoming sessions and PAC events. She also stated that providing childcare and a meal of pizza encourages parent participation and attendance.

The program administrator explained that this program initially was created because "we have to do it by law." The program administrator explained that "by law, we have got to get them adjusted to the American Education System: getting to know the accountability piece, the assessments, so there's that piece; a school strand." She then stated that she and former administrators of this program saw an additional need of this program to teach "about language acquisition, why should we learn English, why should we have a level of conversation… with our children?" How to become involved and what their role is as a parent in the education of their children." She specified that there is "what the law requires"; however they then realized that "in order to navigate the system you have to have some background knowledge that our parents do not have." This explanation demonstrated how this program extends past the legal mandate of four sessions to education parents about special education programs and bilingual education programs (Statuatory Authority: No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Title 1, Part A, Sec. 112(g)(1)(A), Title III, Part C, Sec. 3302, and Title IX, Part A, Sec. 9101 as in Johnson et al., 2005). She also stated she had worked in the district for 13 years and the program had existed through her entire time working in the district. However, the program had taken the form it currently has within "the last four years" because "parents started voicing

what they wanted." The administrator stated that the program "needed that 6-7 years to

build relationships with people" for the program to take its current form. She went on to

explain that the program evolved beyond the four required program sessions in response

to the program administrators' perceived need that parents needed to know more about

schools than simply the requirement of informing them about district programming in

order to be effective advocates for their children. The program administrator described

the process of determining program sessions, at present, as her "sit[ting] down with the

'steering' committee," comprised of parent participants of the PAC program who

assumed a leadership role within the program, to ask about scheduling preferred session

times, dates, frequency, duration, and schedule of program sessions rather than dictating

those sessions herself. She also stated that with the steering committee, "we figure out the

dates, we figure out topics, we figure out locations," then they determine what food will

be supplied at the PAC nights (the PAC program provides pizza, and the parents provide

baked goods for dessert) and who will be responsible for bringing it to the PAC sessions.

Through the parent focus group, parents indicated that program sessions are determined

through surveys issued to parents at program sessions. The parents stated

> when we have the meetings on PAC night, usually they ask us what are the
> themes that we would like to talk about the [next] session… so they divide some
> paper between us and all the moms write down what themes they would like to
> talk about.

Evidence of these surveys was evident in two of the three years of documents provided

by the program administrators. These surveys indicated endorsements of session topics

would be used to guide the schedule for the upcoming school year. The surveys asked

parents to select, from a series of eight options, what themes they would be interested in

learning more about in the upcoming school year. It also gave parents the opportunity to write in any themes that were not mentioned that they would be interested in learning more about. Finally, the survey asked parents to endorse selections of workshops they would like, for example having programs for adolescents as well as the parents, Spanish language classes for students and lessons about self-esteem for parent and children, among other options. In this section as well, parents were given the opportunity to write-in workshop ideas not already thought of by PAC administrators and staff that they would like to see.

Throughout the interview, the program administrator stated the greatest success of the program, commenting on this topic eight times throughout the interview, and a measure of success as she sees it of the program has been "when [the parents] start advocating for themselves, that's the best thing ever." She further explained this success demonstrated in the schools stating "you know, for people who are like 'whatever you say maestro [Spanish word for teacher] to now saying 'wait a minute' at an IEP meeting… there's a lot of reflecting going on now which never happened before." Conversely, the program administrator stated the greatest challenges to the implementation of the program to be "getting [the parents] to take a leadership role" within the PAC program. Throughout the interview, the program administrator expressed a theme of wanting the parent participants to take ownership over the program and fill leadership roles within it, discussing this idea 10 times throughout the interview. The program administrator also discussed themes of culture and the challenge culture can pose to the success of such a program because parents "think this is not part of our job at

school." According to the administrator they think "we're here to teach their kids and that's it and they don't necessarily have to have an active role." She also stated encouraging "mixing" between the different cultures of participants, from one Latino group to another, has been an additional challenge to implementing the program. The administrator stated that to combat this challenge, the staff "kind of model it, because you know, I'm Puerto Rican, we've had Chilean, we've had Mexican, we have Colombian," all coming together to demonstrate that different cultures can work together for the common good. This theme of cultural divide and attempting to bring them together was a common sentiment throughout her interview, being discussed nine times throughout the interview.

The program administrator also discussed the evolution of the PAC program. The administrator stated that "we had a district social worker, someone who worked with the parents and did things…She always had a vision of it being supportive, she had great ideas…" She also stated "the person who was there before me figured that because it is about relationships, this would be the person and then this person was district wide- she went to all of the buildings to help work with bilingual families." This person was also a school social worker. At present, she stated that she took over the position because she "just [doesn't] have anybody in [her] office right now who has the relationship with the community that will make it easier." The program administrator emphasized the theme of building relationships with families to improve the program and foster ownership of the program as a cause for change in leadership to a district administrator with established relationships with bilingual families within it. Throughout the interview, the program

administrator emphasized that the program has "taken the shape that it's in now, with regards to having people be more a part of it, in the last four years." She stated that in the beginning,

> nobody would come, people wouldn't talk… so it ended up me putting on a show… talking about school and what school was like… But in the last four years, we had the idea of… doing more things and also the parents started voicing what they wanted. So that made it a lot easier for us, but I think we needed that six years to build relationships.

She also explained that in the early years of the PAC program, it was intended to be a "supportive" program with "parent liaisons to help [the social worker administrating the program at the time] and to reach out from different schools." However, the parent liaisons, according to the program administrator, had a detrimental effect on parent participation due to previously described cultural differences which limited the integration of participants of differing cultures. The next person who took over administrating the program "figured that because it is about relationships," there would be one person who would go "to all the buildings to help out with bilingual families." When this administrator took over the administration of the PAC program, she determined "there's gotta be some guidance" because her predecessor did not have an overarching plan. Rather, the predecessor was creating resources as need arose. With the change in administration, the program focused on "bringing opportunities to them, giving them choice, making sure that they had a voice." To that end, the program administrator stated that the parents are "now voicing their opinion and they'll talk and share and that makes it a bit better." Further, the program administrator explained that through the PAC program, the idea for a more intensive summer program, Parent's University, evolved. At

Parent's University, the administrators "buy a program" based upon the different topics taught. For example, the program purchased a curriculum "for parenting, and we created our own curriculum" for the district based upon that purchased program. At Parent's University, parents also learn "what a student does" in the district. They learn to use computers, and about the Common Core from which the academic standards for students are derived. The Parent's University "is mostly about school, we don't address the other piece," of parenting, mental health, community resources, etc., which is covered during the year through the PAC program. With regard to a specific curriculum followed through the parent education program, the program administrator stated "we do that mostly at Parent's University (an extension of this program held during the summer on consecutive days for a smaller number of parents)… mostly because I think month-to month-to-month for our parents it's hard to, I think they get bored, and it's a lot to remember." The administrator also stated a dislike of "packaged" programs for a variety of reasons including "a lot of my parents don't feel comfortable writing," which means the programs had to be altered to be delivered orally rather than through writing. Specifically, the program administrator stated the majority of information gathered for implementing this program is found by "word of mouth in many cases, or googling it…"

The data drawn from the program administrator interview, parent focus group, and document analysis demonstrated that the PAC program has changed significantly over the years and is in constant evolution. The themes that emerged from the administrator interview as well as the focus group indicated the importance parent input has in the evolution of the program. The themes derived from coding the administrator

interview indicated that parental input is valued when planning the program. Through her interview, it was apparent that the program administrator views the PAC program as being intended to improve.

Research Question 2

Research question 2 was "To what extent is the PAC program accomplishing its established goals of informing parents about the academic programs available to their students in school, educating parents about areas of concern they have with regard to their children, and facilitating better home-school-community relations?" Responses from the administrator interview, parent focus group, post-presentation survey, and survey administered to school staff were integrated to answer this question.

Informing Parents about Academic Programs

The major themes used to answer the question of "To what extent is the PAC program accomplishing its established goal of informing parents about the academic programs available to their students in school," included the following, ordered by the frequency with which they occurred in the data. The themes were derived from analyses of qualitative data from the administrator interview and parent focus group.

Administrator Interview

- Knowledge – This theme described giving parents knowledge regarding schools, school systems, mental health, community resources, and summer programs available to students (26 mentions).

- Abstract Resources – This theme described resources given to PAC program participants that are abstract such as knowledge or the awareness of programming available to students (10 mentions).

- Law Mandate – This theme described any mention of legal requirements to hold the program (5 mentions)

- New Knowledge – This theme described the newly learned skills or concepts by PAC program participants (4 mentions).

Parent Focus Group

- School Understanding – This theme described mentions of the PAC program sessions helping parents to better understand schools/school programs (10 mentions).

The program administrator explained that the program initially was started to

address legal requirements to

> get them adjusted to the American Education System. Getting to know the accountability piece, the assessments, so there's that piece; like, a school strand. Of knowing about language acquisition, why should we learn English, why should we have a level of conversation with our students/with our children? How to become involved and what their role is as a parent in the education of their children… that's what the law requires.

During the parent focus group, parent responses corroborated the intention of this

program to educate parents about the academic programs available to their children by

stating that parents better

> understand about the programs that they give us at the school, but sometimes they are for special children and those who do not have special children obviously can't put them in that but there are occasions where we can give that information to the people that need it.

This statement indicated that parents not only are learning about programs within the district, but learning about them to an extent that they have confidence sharing what they have learned with others. Similarly, a different parent described a better understanding, which she indicated was gained through participating in the PAC program, of special education services provided at school.

Both the program administrator and parents reported that the PAC program educates parents about a variety of district programs. District teachers, through a survey completed by 21 of all teachers in the district, identified the topics of ESL/ELL process (10 respondents), assessment, bullying, raising children in the United States, computer skills (1 respondent), citizenship, medical (1 respondent), Common Core (1 respondent), fundraising, Open House nights (1 respondent), and parent rights (1 respondent) as being discussed through the PAC program.

Ultimately, across data sources, participants indicated this program educates parents about school programs. However, teachers' responses differed from the program administrator and parent participants with regard to what school district programs the PAC program educates parents about. The program administrator and parent participants discussed learning about a greater variety of programs, including special education program, as well as summer programs and programs available to students who do not natively speak English, than district teachers who responded that the program primarily educates parents about ESL/ELL district programs.

Educating Parents about Their Areas of Concerns With Regard to Their Children

The intent of the PAC program was to not only educate parents about the American School System per legal mandate, but also to support parents to help them to understand crucial aspects to parenting and navigating the waters of being a parent to a student attending the American school system. To accomplish this, the program must consider what topics the parents want more information about beyond the legal requirement. The major themes used to answer the question of "To what extent is the PAC program accomplishing its established goal educating parents about areas of concern they have with regard to their children," included the following, ordered by the frequency with which they occurred in the data. The themes were derived from analyses of qualitative data from the administrator interview and parent focus group.

Administrator Interview

- Parent Determination – This theme described any mention of parents determining the topics/content of the PAC program (10 mentions).

- Parent Involvement – These theme described parent involvement in the schools or PAC program (7 mentions).

- Parent Desire – This theme described mentions of what the PAC program participants would like (7 mentions).

Parent Focus Group

- Positive Session Content – This theme described PAC program session content that has been useful to parents (18 mentions).

- Student Understanding – This theme described mentions of the PAC program sessions helping parents to understand their students (16 mentions).

- Programs are Important – This theme discussed mentions of parent participants reporting attending PAC program sessions because the content is important to their parenting (13 mentions).

- School Understanding – This theme described PAC program sessions helping parents to better understand schools/school programs (10 mentions).

- Participation – This theme described any mention of parents helping to determine the itinerary of PAC program sessions (7 mentions).

- Benefits Students – This theme described mentions of the PAC program sessions educating parents in ways to help their students (6 mentions)

- Negative Session Content – This theme described PAC program session content that has not been useful to parents (1 mention).

The program administrator explained that although the initial intent of the program was to fulfill legal requirements to educate parents about the American Education system, it quickly evolved beyond the four legally-required sessions to address a greater breath of information in response to parent need. The program administrator explained, "… we then saw, in order to navigate the system, you have to have some background knowledge that our parents do not have. So, why do we do things the way we do it." She went on to describe the goal of this program as "giving them information that's going to make them advocate for themselves." The information she described giving them to meet this goal is vast, ranging from help with rent or light bills to medical

and mental health community resources and connections, to immigration, to the use of

technology and how that influences children, to mental illness including suicide and

issues contributing to suicide in teens such as bullying and its implications for educators

and parents. Specifically, the program administrator stated "by law, we have got to get

them adjusted to the American Education System…. How to become involved, and what

their role is as a parent in the education of their children," as the goals of the PAC

program. During the interview held with the program administrator, she referenced

providing knowledge to parents or the development of skills to address specific issues ten

times. The program administrator also stated that during the spring prior to the upcoming

school year, she "sit(s) down with the 'steering' committee" to ask about scheduling

preferred session times, dates, frequency, and topics to be presented. She also stated that

with the steering committee "we figure out the dates, we figure out topics, we figure out

locations," ensuring that parents have a say in the topics discussed through the year to

guarantee they are beneficial to parents and what they parents need/want to be advocates

for their children.

The parents who participated in the parent focus group responded that before

attending the PAC program, they thought it would address "how [their children] were

doing, in their classes." They went on to explain that in actuality, what they learned

through the program "was very different." They specified that the program "taught us,

more like they have helped us to see what types of benefits the children have. What

supports [are in place] for the children." One parent explained that she has a student who

receives special educations services and that this program has been helpful in educating

her about what "to teach my child with special needs" and what her rights are. A different

mother explained that this program is beneficial in teaching parents "that want… support

for [their children]" to "ask for help for them." A different parent specified that these

program sessions "give us tips as to how we as parents can take notice" of whether

students are engaging in activities they should not participate in, such as substance use.

Parents also stated that they attend sessions because, as one parent stated, "I think it's

important [to attend] for all of them." A different parent stated "we go because it interests

us how we can educate the children… They all participate in the program for the same

reason, that they like it. They all flock to this program and it's very good for everyone."

A third parent responded that the reason many people attend the sessions is because

through a vote, they have a say in what session content will be discussed. She stated "the

survey is sent about what is it that the people want, what do they ask for?...That's when it

brings more people, and I know it's because the people vote." A different participant

stated that "the information they give, the tips, the websites that they give us… they

guide us about the benefits that we can receive in the community" as the reason she

attends the sessions. Similarly, a different parent stated she attends because the program

> explains to us how they qualify the students during the school year… sometimes
> they present us [with] graphs that we don't understand… they give [the students]
> state exams, the teacher explains it [and] shows us how the children, what average
> they are at. They help us decipher the graphs.

According to the post-presentation surveys completed by parent participants, the

presentations addressed what they thought would be addressed (at the first administration,

four of five respondents stated the presentation addressed what they thought it would, one

stated partially; at the second administration, four of five respondents stated the

presentation covered what they thought it would). All of the respondents stated that the content of the presentations had been helpful to them. Through the survey, the parents identified specific pieces of information they found particularly helpful to them. At the first administration, three of the five respondents stated they found learning to "block websites" to be most helpful, two of the five respondents stated they found learning more about internet "security" to be helpful. One respondent stated, learning about "social networks" was helpful and another responded learning about "applications" was helpful. One respondent did not answer this question. Responses at the second administration of this survey showed three respondents found learning "how to keep your family in order" to be most helpful, one respondent found learning about communication to be most helpful, a different respondent found learning how to "control emotions" and "take care of yourself physically and mentally" to be most helpful. Of the five participants who completed this survey, one did not respond to this question.

Responses to the administrator interview, parent focus group, and post-presentation parent-participant survey indicate efforts have been made to extend the PAC program content beyond the required four sessions addressing programs available to students and the American school system to include topics of interest to families. As indicated both within the administrator interview and the parent focus group, parent input is used to determine what session content will address. Through the parent focus group and post-presentation survey, parents indicated that they enjoy and benefit from the content of the PAC presentations.

Facilitating Better Home-School-Community Relations

Another goal of the PAC program is to facilitate better home-school- community relations with parents through educating parents about what resources are available to them. The major themes used to answer the research question of "To what extent is the PAC program accomplishing its established goal of facilitating better home- school-community relations" included the following, ordered by the frequency with which they occurred in the data. Themes were derived from the qualitative analysis of the parent focus group.

- Program Awareness – This theme described PAC program sessions helping parents to become more familiar with community programs and resources for their children (8 mentions).

- Parent: School Change – This theme described parents changing their approach to interacting with schools as a result of PAC program participation (3 mentions).

- School: Parent Change- This theme described mentions of the schools changing their approach to interacting with parents (2 mentions).

- Connection – This theme described PAC program sessions helping parents to feel more connected to the schools (1 mention).

Parents who participated in the parent focus group disclosed that this program provided them with new knowledge regarding the use of the school-based computer system, "The Portal," to be able to track their student's performance in school and obtain more information than their students are provided with and provide to them as a result. Additionally, one parent stated that this program helps parents know "how to talk to talk

to teachers when children lie to us" that they now know how to "go and talk to them directly." This parent went on to say that this knowledge and/or confidence "more than anything have helped me get more involved at school. It helps the children a lot." One parent also stated that the PAC program provides the parents with information about programs that exist for students and because of their knowledge gained through the program; they are able to go to the school and say "this is what I'm looking for." One parent stated "they even tell us, 'say this, say that'" to help parents feel comfortable approaching the school and advocating for their children. Another parent described the information provided through the PAC program as

> opening more doors for us, to go into labyrinths that we don't know… [for example, how to] understanding children, how to understand how they are doing in school, their behavior, how to treat them, how the teachers treat the children, how to have communication with the teachers, how we ourselves can have that communication with children at home.

Overall, three statements were made through this focus group indicating parents have altered their communication with schools as a result of the PAC program. However, the parents stated that the schools continue to communicate with the parents in the same manner they always have, regardless of parent involvement in the PAC program. One stated "there isn't any difference… they communicate through the telephone, by email, or with a letter that comes to us with the children. We always have that communication… there isn't a difference." However, one parent clarified "but if there is something that we don't understand, then the PAC program helps us to ask those questions referring to what the school sent us." Two comments were made during this focus group stating that there

has not been any change to the school-to-parent communication as a result of the PAC

program.

Table 7. Staff Responses to Teacher Survey - Research Question Two

Response	Percentage of Total Respondents	Percentage of Responses to Specific Item
Parents Attend PAC Sessions		
Attend	42.9%	60%
Do Not Attend	14.3%	20%
Not Sure	14.4%	20%
No Response	28.6%	NA
Of those who attend program sessions		
1-3 parents attend	19%	44.4%
4-6 parents attend	9.5%	22.2%
7-9 parents attend	4.7%	11.1%
10-12 parents attend	4.7%	11.1%
16 or more parents attend	4.7%	11.1%
The Influence of the PAC Program On Parental Involvement		
Written Communication		
Increased	19%	28.6%
(Much More)	(9.5%)	(50%)
(More)	(4.8%)	(25%)
(Somewhat More)	(4.8%)	(25%)
No Change	9.5%	14.3%
Decrease	28.6%	21.4%
(Much Less)	(28.6%)	(100%)
Were Unable to Tell	23.8%	35.7%
Email Communication		
Increased	14.3%	21.4%
(Much More)	(9.5%)	(66.7)
(Somewhat More)	(4.8%)	(33.3%)
No Change	14.3%	21.4%
Decreased	9.5%	14.3%
(Somewhat Less)	(4.8%)	(50%)
(Much Less)	(4.8%)	(50%)
Were Unable to Tell	28.6%	42.9%
Face-to-Face Meetings		
Increase	47.6%	28.6%
(Much More)	(9.5%)	(50%)
(Somewhat More)	(9.5%)	(50%)
No Change	9.5%	14.3%
Decrease	14.3%	21.4%
(Much Less)	(14.3%)	(100%)
Were Unable to Tell	23.8%	35.7%

Attendance to Parent-Teacher Conferences		
Increase	19%	28.6%
(Much More)	(9.5%)	(50%)
(More)	(9.5%)	(50%)
No Change	14.3%	21.4%
Were Unable to Tell	28.6%	42.9%
Attendance to School Events		
Increase	28.6%	42.9%
(Much More)	(14.3%)	(50%)
(More)	(9.5%)	(33.3%)
(Somewhat More)	(4.8%)	(16.7%)
No Change	14.3%	21.4%
Were Unable to Tell	23.8%	35.7%
Involvement in Their Children's Education		
Increase	33.3%	50%
(Much More)	(14.3%)	(42.9%)
(More)	(38%)	(28.6%)
(Somewhat More)	(38%)	(28.6%)
No Change	9.5%	14.3%`
Were Unable to Tell	23.8%	35.7%
Support to Children's Education		
Increase	33.3%	50%
(Much More)	(14.3%)	(42.9%)
(More)	(9.5%)	(28.6%)
(Somewhat More)	(9.5%)	(28.6%)
No Change	9.5%	14.3%
Were Unable to Tell	23.8%	35.7%

Of the 21 responses received to the teacher survey, nine respondents stated that their students' parents attend PAC sessions, three stated their students' parents do not attend, and three stated they were unsure of their students' parents' participation in the PAC program the remaining six surveys did not provide a response to this question. Of those who affirmed that the parents of their students attend PAC presentations, four (44.4%) stated that between 1-3 students' parents attend, two (22.2%) endorsed between 4-6 students' parents attending, one (11.1%) endorsed between 7-9 students' parents attending, one (11.1%) endorsed between 10-12 students' parents attending, and one (11.1%) endorsed 16 or more students' parents attending PAC sessions. Fourteen respondents provided information regarding the influence of the PAC program on

parental involvement at school to the education of their children. According to these results, four of the fourteen (28.6%) respondents experienced an increase (2 "much more," 1 "more," 1 "somewhat more") in written communication by parents who participate in the PAC program, two (14.3%) did not see a change, three (21.4%) saw less written communication, and five (35.7%) "couldn't tell" a difference in the amount of written communication. Three of the 14 (21.4%) respondents (identified an increase (2 "much more," 1 "somewhat more") in email communication from parents who participate in the PAC program, three endorsed the same level of communication, two identified less communication (1 "somewhat less," 1 "much less") and six (42.9%) "couldn't tell" a difference in the level of emailed communication. Four of the 14 staff respondents (28.6%) identified increased (2 "much more," 2 "somewhat more") attendance to face-to-face meetings between parents who participate in the PAC program and school staff, two (14.3%) endorsed the same level of attendance, three (21.4%) identified "much less" attendance, and five (35.7%) "couldn't tell" a difference in attendance to face-to-face meetings with staff. Four of the 14 respondents (28.6%) identified an increase (2 "much more," 2 "more") in parental attendance of parent-teacher conferences by parents who attend PAC presentations; three respondents (21.4%) identified the same level of attendance, six respondents (42.9%) "couldn't tell" a difference in the rate of attendance to parent-teacher conferences. Six of the 14 respondents (42.9%) identified an increase (3 "much more", 2 "more," 1 "somewhat more) in parental attendance to school events by parents involved in the PAC program, three respondents (21.4%) identified the same level of attendance, and five respondents (35.7%) endorsed that they "couldn't tell" a

change in attendance at school events by PAC program parental participants. Seven of the

fourteen staff members (50%) identified an increase (3 "much more," 2 "more," 2

"somewhat more") in the level of involvement parents who participate in PAC have in

their student's education, two (14.3%) endorsed the same level of involvement, and five

(35.7%) identified that they "couldn't tell" a change in the level of involvement these

parents had in their student's education. Seven of the 14 (50%) staff respondents

identified an increase (3 "much more," 2 "more," 2 "somewhat more") in the support

parents participating in the PAC program gave to their children's education, two (14.3%)

endorsed the same level of support, and five (35.7%) indicated they "couldn't tell" a

change in the level of support these parents had for their children's education.

     The parents who participated in the parent focus group also stated that the PAC

program has helped facilitate connections to community resources. As one participant

stated, "they have connected us to other things that they occasionally don't have in the

school… they tell us 'oh, it's there' and they connect us with things that aren't in the

school." A different parent clarified that "we also have to see, sometimes we aren't

always eligible" stating that the parents are told about a variety of programs, some of

which apply to others than themselves. One parent went on to say

> we have more [information about programs in the community] because there are
> times that we don't know and they call us 'hey listen, there's this program. Would
> you like to enroll your children in this program?'… they help us a lot.

Throughout the parent focus group, parents discussed the theme of becoming more

familiar with community programs and resources for their children eight times.

Combined, these data sources indicated that parents believe they have increased knowledge in how to interact with schools and therefore do interact with schools and staff more than they had prior to the PAC program. However, not all staff noted an increase in parental involvement. Of the 14 respondents to relevant items of the teacher survey, five to six respondents "couldn't tell" a change in interaction with parents, two to three noted no difference, though three-seven respondents indicated an increase in interaction across the evaluated dimensions.

Despite a sense of change in how parents communicated with the schools, the parents, through the parent focus group, did not identify a change in interaction the school had with them. They stated that the schools interacted with them the same way they always had.

Parent participants, through the parent focus group, indicated a feeling of being more aware of community resources as a result of the PAC program. They stated that the PAC program informs them of resources available to them and that this has been helpful.

The Extent to Which These Goals Have Been Met

The purpose of this study was to analyze the effectiveness of the PAC program to accomplishing its established goals. To do this, it was necessary to consider participant's perceptions of the PAC program's success at meeting its goals. Through analysis of the program administrator interview and the parent focus groups, the following major themes emerged. The following, ordered by frequency with which they occurred in the data, describes those emergent themes.

Administrator Interview

- Knowledge – This theme described giving parents knowledge regarding schools, school systems, mental health, community resources, and summer programs available to students (26 mentions).

- Building Relationships – This theme described parents establishing a relationship with the building/school (13 mentions).

- Conversation – This theme described parental verbal participation in the PAC program (2 positive statements, 2 negative statements, 8 neutral statements).

- Parent Leadership – This theme described parents taking a leadership role in the implementation of the PAC program (10 mentions).

- Parent Self- Advocacy – This theme described increased self-advocacy by PAC program participants (8 mentions).

- Parent Desire – This theme described any mention of what the PAC program participants would like to learn through the program sessions (7 mentions).

- Program Presence – This theme described the awareness of the community of the PAC program's existence (4 mentions).

- New Knowledge – This theme described newly learned skills or concepts by PAC program participants (4 mentions).

Parent Focus Group

- Positive Session Content – This theme described PAC program session content being useful to parents (18 mentions).

- Student Understanding – This theme described PAC program sessions helping parents to better understand their students (16 mentions).

- Take Home – This theme described the PAC program providing parent participants with tips, resources, and websites to support their parenting at home (14 mentions).

- Accountability – This theme described PAC program participants reporting feeling a greater sense of responsibility/accountability to their parenting and participation in schools (11 mentions).

- School Understanding – This theme described PAC program sessions helping parents to better understand schools/school programs (10 mentions).

- Program Awareness – This theme described PAC program participants becoming more familiar with community programs and resources for their children (8 mentions).

- Benefits Students – This theme described PAC program sessions educating parents in ways to help their students (6 mentions).

- Positive – This theme described mentions of positive feelings toward the PAC program (4 mentions).

- Parent: School Change – This theme described parents changing their approach to interacting with schools as a result of PAC program participation (3 mentions).

- School: Parent Change – This theme described schools changing their approach to interacting with parents (2 mentions).

- Connection – This theme described mentions of the PAC program sessions helping parents to feel more connected to schools (1 mention).

- Negative Session Content – This theme described PAC program session content not being useful to parents (1 mention).

- Negative – This theme described mentions of negative feelings toward the PAC program (0 mentions).

The program administrator indicated the goals of the PAC program are slowly being met; however, there are still goals to continue working toward. She stated,

> I think that people do know that we are here… they realize that they have somebody that can support them and a group of people that if they say whatever's gonna happen, we'll try our best to have a conversation and to give the resources and at least tell the parent, you're not the only one, it's ok.

She went on to say "we've done a great job with our Hispanic families; we need to expand to other families." Consistently throughout this interview, the program administrator stated her greatest goal for the program is for parents to develop self-advocacy skills. She stated, "if you don't speak up in this country, you're not going to get anything for yourself or your children." She also stated that

> self-advocacy is a big piece because they think that teachers are supposed to do that for them… If they can just not be afraid to speak up, even if it's just: I don't like it and say 'I don't like it'. I'm not saying you're going to be the master of something, but you need to say 'I don't like this, I'm uncomfortable, my child's not happy' and we have to listen. But some of them don't say anything and that's sad… They're getting there.

Unanimously, the parent participants stated they would continue to attend PAC program sessions indicating overall positive feelings about the utility of the program and enjoyment of the program. To this end, one parent remarked

> well I think all the information that they have been giving us, it's all been good. Well, for us that are interested in it, we use it in one form or another… there's nothing bad, on the contrary they are helping us more and more and we hope that it continues.

All participants agreed with this statement. Overall, coding of this focus group yielded 19 comments regarding the session content as being positive. There were no statements of negative sentiments made about the program content.

Similar sentiments were expressed through the post-presentation parent-participant survey. At both administrations, all responses stated "everything was helpful" or "nothing was unhelpful" in response to a question posed about the helpfulness of the program session content.

Of the 21 staff members who responded to the teacher survey, 11 (52%) commented on whether the program was meeting its goals. The respondents identified these goals as: providing a forum "for parents to share opinions, thoughts, and concerns with school staff and provide input for important decisions regarding academics, school policies…etc."; "inform[ing] parents… of services available for them and their kids. Connecting them with services available. Teaching them about school expectations and helping them be part of their kids' school career"; facilitating "parent involvement and education"; educating parents about "how they can support their children to be successful in school, provid[ing] feedback to schools, school districts, and the state regarding problems faced by their target populations"; "inform[ing] and educat[ing] bilingual parents on different topics that are relevant to their school community"; "support[ing] its teachers and support[ing] student learning outside of the classroom"; "collaborat[ing] with and support[ing district] parents in areas such as academic achievement, social-emotional well-being, behavior and developmental expectations as equal partners toward the success of our students"; "develop[ing] a relationship between parents and school";

"serv[ing] as an advocate and keep parents informed about the school, and district policies, creat[ing] a bridge for the parents." Of the 11 responses provided, two (18.2%) stated the program is not meeting its goals, one (9.1%) stated the program is partially meeting its goals, five stated the program is meeting its goals, and three (27.3%) stated they were unsure.

Parent responses through the parent focus group and post-presentation surveys indicate parents feel positively about the program and that it is both enjoyable and beneficial to them, providing them with increased knowledge and skill to support their parenting at home and enabling them to be better advocates for their children at school. District staff, including the program administrator, indicate some sentiments of positivity as well as expressions of continued need. The district teacher responses through the program administrator's interview and the district teacher survey indicated that although there has been growth in some areas, there is still room for improvement to meeting the established goals of the program including expanding the program to include other demographics and increasing parental involvement in schools and the PAC program.

Research Question 3

The third research question of this research study was "Are parent perceptions of the PAC program influencing the program's delivery?" This research question is two-fold. It first questions what perceptions the parent-participants of the PAC program hold of the program. Secondly, it asks how those perceptions influence the program's delivery, if at all. Data from the administrator interview, parent focus group, and post-presentation survey were used to answer this two-fold question.

Parent Perceptions of the PAC Program

The major themes used to answer the question of "Are parent perceptions of the PAC program influencing the program's delivery" included the following, ordered by the frequency with which they occurred in the data. These themes were derived from analysis of qualitative data from the parent focus group.

Parent Focus Group

- Positive Session Content – This theme described PAC program content being useful to parents (18 mentions).

- Frequency – This theme described the frequency of which parents attended PAC program sessions (15 mentions).

- Programs are Important – This theme described PAC program participants attending sessions because the content is important to their ability to parent (13 mentions).

- Benefits Students – This theme described PAC program sessions educating parents in ways to help their students (6 mentions).

- Programs are Interesting – This theme described PAC program participants attending sessions because the content is interesting (5 mentions).

- Positive – This theme described mentions of positive feelings toward the PAC program (4 mentions).

- Negative Session Content – This theme described PAC program content not being useful to parents (1 mention).

- Negative – This theme described mentions of negative feelings toward the PAC program (0 mentions).

The parents who participated in the parent focus group stated positive feelings toward the program. They stated "we have gained a lot" and described different pieces of knowledge they have gained from the program including what it is like to be a student in the American school system, how schools determine which students will receive what educational supports, information about "sex and alcohol and first aid" and more. One parent explained, "I thought it would be information regarding the children, how they were doing in their classes and all that. But when I was in the session, what they were giving us was very different. It was more beneficial…" Another parent stated, with regard to the program sessions, "they all have been perfect." Of the five participants, each parent stated only positive statements about the PAC program. As one parent stated,

> I think all of the information that they have been giving us, it's all been good… we use it in one form or the other but we use it… There's nothing and that, on the contrary they are helping us more and more and we hope that it continues with more people, not just us, with the rest of the people who come after.

To this statement, each of the six parent participants agreed. A different parent went on to say,

> I give the PAC program thanks. They have helped us Hispanics… a lot who sometimes, because of the language we put a barrier for ourselves and don't want to advance. But this program has helped us, has helped us go over that barrier.

Across the two sessions where the post-presentation survey was administered to parents, respondents unanimously stated that the program session was helpful to them, with two respondents at the first administration and three respondents at the second administration stating "very much so." The parents unanimously responded positively about the sessions they attended, and when asked whether they had additional comments about the program, one parent stated "go more into depth on this topic on other nights,

[it's] too much to cover in one session." However, at the second administration, two parents wrote in additional comments stating "this theme and many more" and "have this program leader return."

The data gathered for this research study indicate parents feel positively about the PAC program and perceive benefits from the program unanimously. Parents expressed benefiting from the program in many ways and feeling as though this program is helping them to overcome barriers they were not able to hurdle independently. The data gathered through the parent-participant focus group and post-presentation survey indicate parents hold the perception that the PAC program is beneficial to them and provides them with helpful and useful information, the parents expressed an overall positive feeling toward and about the PAC program.

Parent Perceptions of their Influence on PAC Program Delivery

Themes also emerged from the administrator interview and parent focus group which were pertinent to determining whether parent perceptions of the PAC program have an influence on the program's delivery. The major themes used to answer this research question included the following, ordered by the frequency with which they occurred in the data. The themes were derived from analysis of qualitative data from the administrator interview and parent focus group.

Administrator Interview

▪ Parent Determination – This theme described PAC program participants determining topics/content for the program (10 mentions).

- Time – This theme described PAC program participants helping to determine the schedule/when program sessions will occur (10 mentions).

- Parent Involvement – This theme described parent involvement in school or the PAC program (7 mentions).

Parent Focus Group

- Participation – This theme described parent participants of the PAC program helping to determine the itinerary of PAC sessions (7 mentions).

During the administrator interview, the program administrator explained that during the summer or spring of the previous school year, she "sits down with the 'steering committee," a group of parents who participate in the PAC program to ask when to meet and why those dates/times work best for families to ensure that the dates/times would work for the general population and not only for specific parents. Data regarding how PAC program participants are selected to participate on the steering committee was not collected through this study. The program administrator also said she "started asking questions about structure, what do you want" to the parents who are part of what she referred to as the steering committee. She explained that

> they're the ones who tell me what kind of topics. Depending on where the topics fall, then… I spend half the year on instruction and the second half of the year is about supporting families, because at some point you can only hear so much about testing, reading, math, it's like, who cares!

She stated that at this point in the program, the parents have a strong influence in determining the discussion topics and presentation of the program, though in earlier years of the program it was more directed by the administrators of the program.

The parents who participated in the parent focus group indicated that the reason many people attend the sessions is because through a vote, they have a say in what session content will be discussed. One parent stated "the survey is sent about what is it that the people want, what do they ask for?...That's when it brings more people, and I know it's because the people vote." Another parent agreed, adding that they ask the participant "what themes they would like to talk about, like drugs and alcohol or about bilingual programs. What types of help there are for the children such as special education, so everyone writes down what they would like." This parent stated that this was how topics of discussion were chosen for presentations. Parents also indicated that they help to determine the calendar of the program, not only the topics to be covered but the timing of the program as well. Overall, the parents participating in the parent focus group discussed the theme of participating in the planning, scheduling, and content of the PAC program seven times during the focus group.

Responses to the administrator interview and parent focus group indicated parents of students attend the PAC program sessions regularly, in part because they feel a sense of ownership over the program as a result of taking surveys regarding what content they would like presented through PAC presentations and being asked when those presentations should take place. Parents stated they enjoy the presentations and benefit from the program sessions. The program administrator confirmed that parents play a large role in determining the program content and scheduling. Therefore, the positive perspectives parents have of the program encourage their participation in the program and continued attendance to program sessions. To encourage continued involvement, and

ensure that parents continue to attend sessions, the program administrator uses parent input regarding areas of interests and content to support their parenting of students within the American education system, a "steering committee," made up of parents from the PAC program, is consulted to plan the PAC course and sequence of presentations.

Research Question 4

To learn more about the influence the PAC program has had within schools, a survey was administered to all teachers working in the school district where this research study took place. The results of this survey were used to answer the fourth research question of this research study, "How do teachers perceive the PAC program's influence within their classrooms?"

Of the 21 responses to the district teacher survey, 15 (71.4%) responded to the item asking whether their student's parents attend(ed) PAC program presentations. Of those 15, 60% (9 respondents) stated their students' parents did attend, 20% (3 respondents) stated their students' parents did not attend, and 20% (3 respondents) stated they were unsure of whether their students' parents attended PAC presentations. Of the nine staff members who stated their students' parents do attend PAC sessions, 44.4% (4 respondents) stated between 1-3 students' parents attended PAC sessions, 22.2% (2 respondents) stated between 4-6 students' parents attended, 11.1% (1 respondent) stated between 7-9 students' parents attend, 11.1% (1 respondent) stated between 10-12 students' parents attend, and 11.1% (1 respondent) stated 16 or more of their students' parents attend PAC sessions.

Table 8. Staff Responses to Teacher Survey - Research Question Four

Response	Percentage of Total Respondents	Percentage of Responses to Specific Item
Parents Attend PAC Sessions		
Attend	42.9%	60%
Do Not Attend	14.3%	20%
Not Sure	14.4%	20%
No Response	28.6%	NA
Of those who attend program sessions		
1-3 parents attend	19%	44.4%
4-6 parents attend	9.5%	22.2%
7-9 parents attend	4.7%	11.1%
10-12 parents attend	4.7%	11.1%
16 or more parents attend	4.7%	11.1%
PAC Program Content Addresses		
ESL/ELL Process	47.6%	100%
Additional Responses	28.6%	60%
What the PAC Program Should Address		
Information About the Different Program Each Program Offers	4.8%	9.1%
Reading Strategies for Parents	4.8%	9.1%
Discipline Strategies for Parents	4.8%	9.1%
English Classes for Parents	4.8%	9.1%
Test Results and Information About How to Interpret Them	4.8%	9.1%
The Importance of the Native Language to Learning	4.8%	9.1%
School Budget	4.8%	9.1%
School Activities	4.8%	9.1%
How to be More Involved In Schools	14.3%	27.3%
The Influence of the PAC Program On Parental Involvement		
Written Communication		
Increased	19%	28.6%
(Much More)	(9.5%)	(50%)
(More)	(4.8%)	(25%)
(Somewhat More)	(4.8%)	(25%)
No Change	9.5%	14.3%
Decrease	28.6%	21.4%
(Much Less)	(28.6%)	(100%)
Were Unable to Tell	23.8%	35.7%
Email Communication		
Increased	14.3%	21.4%
(Much More)	(9.5%)	(66.7)
(Somewhat More)	(4.8%)	(33.3%)
No Change	14.3%	21.4%
Decreased	9.5%	14.3%
(Somewhat Less)	(4.8%)	(50%)
(Much Less)	(4.8%)	(50%)
Were Unable to Tell	28.6%	42.9%

Face-to-Face Meetings		
Increase	47.6%	28.6%
(Much More)	(9.5%)	(50%)
(Somewhat More)	(9.5%)	(50%)
No Change	9.5%	14.3%
Decrease	14.3%	21.4%
(Much Less)	(14.3%)	(100%)
Were Unable to Tell	23.8%	35.7%
Attendance to Parent-Teacher Conferences		
Increase	19%	28.6%
(Much More)	(9.5%)	(50%)
(More)	(9.5%)	(50%)
No Change	14.3%	21.4%
Were Unable to Tell	28.6%	42.9%
Attendance to School Events		
Increase	28.6%	42.9%
(Much More)	(14.3%)	(50%)
(More)	(9.5%)	(33.3%)
(Somewhat More)	(4.8%)	(16.7%)
No Change	14.3%	21.4%
Were Unable to Tell	23.8%	35.7%
Involvement in Their Children's Education		
Increase	33.3%	50%
(Much More)	(14.3%)	(42.9%)
(More)	(38%)	(28.6%)
(Somewhat More)	(38%)	(28.6%)
No Change	9.5%	14.3%`
Were Unable to Tell	23.8%	35.7%
Support to Children's Education		
Increase	33.3%	50%
(Much More)	(14.3%)	(42.9%)
(More)	(9.5%)	(28.6%)
(Somewhat More)	(9.5%)	(28.6%)
No Change	9.5%	14.3%
Were Unable to Tell	23.8%	35.7%
Is the PAC Program Accomplishing the Purpose it was Designed For		
It is	23.8%	45.5%
Partially Is	4.8%	9.1%
It Is Not	9.5%	18.2%
Unsure	14.3%	27.3%
Staff Participation In the PAC Program		
Participated in the Program Previously	42.9%	NA
(Attended Meetings)	(14.3%)	(33.3%)
(Provided Childcare/ Helped with Homework/ Served Food)	(23.8%)	(55.6%)
(Staff Member of Program)	(4.8%)	(11.1%)
Never Participated in the Program	23.8%	NA
No Response	33.3%	NA

Of the 10 respondents (47.6%) who specified what they believed the PAC program content addresses, 100% (10 respondents) specified that the program content addressed the ESL/ELL process. Six respondents added additional responses including "assessment, bullying, raising children in the USA, computer skills, etc.," "citizenship, medical," "common core," "fundraising, Open House nights," and "Parent Rights." Eleven of the 21 respondents (63.5%) provided information regarding what they thought the PAC program should educate parents about. Nine and one tenth percent of respondents (1 respondent) stated the program should address "information about the different programs and what each program offers." Nine and one percent (1 respondent) stated the PAC program should provide reading strategies to parents, 9.1% (1 respondent) stated the program should address discipline strategies for the parents to use with children, 9.1% (1 respondent) stated the program should provide English classes for parent participants, 9.1% (1 respondent) stated the program should provide test results and information about how to interpret them to parents, 9.1% (1 respondent) stated the program should provide information regarding the importance of the students' native language to their learning, 9.1% (1 respondent) stated the program should educate parents about the school's budget, 9.1% (1 respondent) stated the program should educate parents about school activities, 27.3% (3 respondents) stated the program should educate parents in how to be more involved with the schools.

Fourteen (66.7%) respondents indicated the effect the PAC program has had on their interactions with parents according to their perception. Twenty-eight and six tenths percent of respondents stated the PAC program's influence has resulted in increased

written communication from parents (2 respondents stated "much more," 1 respondent

stated "more," one respondent stated "somewhat more," 14.3% (2 respondents) stated

there had been no change in the written communication with parents, 21.4% (3

respondents) stated they had received less written communication with parents as a result

of the PAC program (3 respondents stated "much less"), and 35.7% (5 respondents)

stated they "couldn't tell" a difference in the amount of written communication received

from parents who participate in the PAC program. Twenty-one and four tenths percent of

the respondents (3 respondents) stated they perceived increased emailed communication

with parents who participate in the PAC program (2 respondents stated "much more," 1

respondent stated "somewhat more"), 21.4% (3 respondents) of respondents stated they

received the same level of emailed communication with these parents, 14.3% of

respondents (2 respondents) stated they perceived less emailed communication with

parents who participate in the PAC program (1 stated "somewhat less", 1 stated "much

less"), and 42.9% of respondents (6 respondents) stated they "couldn't tell" whether their

emailed communication with parents increased or decreased as a result of PAC program

participation. Twenty-eight and six tenths percent of respondents (4 respondents) stated

they perceived an increase in parents scheduling meetings with teachers to communicate

as a result of PAC program participation (2 respondents stated "much more," 2

respondents stated "somewhat more"), 14.3% of respondents (2 respondents) stated they

perceived the same level scheduled meetings as a result of PAC program involvement,

21.4% of respondents (3 respondents) stated they perceived fewer scheduled meetings

from PAC program participants (3 respondents stated "much less"), and 35.7% of

respondents (5 respondents) stated they "couldn't tell" a difference in the number of

meetings scheduled by parents who participate in the PAC program as a result of its

sessions. Respondents also indicated whether or not PAC program participation had a

perceived effect on parent attendance at parent-teacher conferences. Thirty-five and

seven tenths percent of respondents (5 respondents) stated participation had increased

parent attendance (2 respondents stated "much more," 2 respondents stated "more," 1

respondent stated "somewhat more"), 21.4% of respondents (3 respondents) stated parent

attendance remained the same, and 42.9% of respondents (6 respondents) stated they

"couldn't tell" a difference in attendance to parent-teacher conferences by PAC program

participants. Forty-two and nine tenths percent of respondents (6 respondents) stated

they perceived increased attendance of PAC program participants at school events (3

respondents stated "much more," 2 respondents stated "more," 1 respondent stated

"somewhat more"), 21.4% of respondents (3 respondents) stated they did not perceive a

change in attendance to school events by PAC participants, and 35.7% of respondents (5

respondents) stated they "couldn't tell" a difference in the level of attendance to school

events by PAC program participants. Fourteen respondents (66.7%) indicated what

influence they perceived the PAC program having on the level of involvement the PAC

program had on parent involvement in their children's education. 50% of respondents (7

respondents) stated they perceived an increase in the level of involvement in their

children's education by parents who participate in the PAC program (3 stated "much

more," 2 stated "more," 2 stated "somewhat more"), 14.2%% of respondents (2

respondents) stated they perceived the same level of involvement in their children's

education, and 35.7% (5 respondents) "couldn't tell" a difference in the level of

involvement in their children's education by PAC participants. Fifty percent of

respondents (7 respondents) stated they perceived an increase in support provided to

students' education by PAC program participants (3 respondents stated "much more," 2

respondents stated "more," and 2 respondents stated "somewhat more"), 14.3% of

respondents (2 respondents) stated they perceived the same level of support given to their

children's education by PAC program participants, and 35.7% of respondents (5

respondents) stated they "couldn't tell" a difference in the level of support given to their

children's education by PAC program participants.

Eleven participants (52.4%) responded indicating their perception of whether the

PAC program is "accomplishing the purpose it was designed for." Of these responses,

45.5% of respondents (5 respondents) stated it is, 9.1% of respondents (1 respondent)

stated it is partially, 18.2% of respondents (2 respondents) stated it is not, and 27.3% of

respondents (3 respondents) stated they are unsure.

Of the 21 surveys completed by district staff members, nine (42.9%) stated they

had participated with the PAC program, five stated (23.8%) they had not, seven (33.3%)

did not respond to this item on the survey. Of the nine respondents who stated they had

participated in the PAC program, three (33.3%) stated they had attended meetings, five

(55.6%) stated they had served food and/or babysat children and/or helped students with

homework, and one (11.1%) stated they were a staff member who participated in the

program as a staff member.

These results indicate teachers have varied experiences with the PAC program and its influence on PAC program participants' involvement in school. The majority of respondents stated that the program is meeting its goals, and perceive an increase in involvement by PAC program participants in the school environment. However, an equal number of respondents stated they had the perception of increased correspondence as those who indicated less correspondence with teachers at school.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The purpose to this research study was to evaluate a program created in response

to a legal mandate to educate parents of students who participate in TBE programs about

the American education system. Chapter Five will present a discussion of how the

findings from this research study within the context of the existing literature. It will

compare the findings from this study to existing literature to determine consistencies and

discrepancies. It will also articulate the limitations of this research study. Lastly, Chapter

Five will articulate implications for future research in this area, as well as for the

implementation and modification of similar parental education programs for CLD

parents.

Research Question 1

Is the PAC Program Delivered with Integrity?

To solicit this parent involvement and participation, and also to educate parents of

their rights within schools, it has been mandated that for schools to receive Title I or Title

III funding, information must be provided to parents of CLD students enrolled in ELL

programs. The recommended method for disseminating this information is through a

minimum of four informational meetings educating parents about how they can become

involved in the education of their children and how to help their children learn English

through regularly scheduled meetings (Statuatory Authority: No Child Left Behind Act of

2001, Title 1, Part A, Sec.112(g)(1)(A), Title III, Part C, Sec. 3302, and Title IX, Part A,

Sec 9101 as cited in Johnson et al., 2005). The program administrator stated the purpose

to the PAC program originated in meeting this legal requirement; however, it evolved to

more. The legal mandate to establish mechanisms for educating parents whose children

are enrolled in TBE programs is intended to ensure that all parents are well-informed

about the educational opportunities of their children sufficiently to exercise a contributing

voice in the educational decision making process for their children. The concern being

that when parents are uninformed and less-familiar with the American school system,

they do not fulfill and/or are denied the opportunity to fulfill their role in the educational

decision making process (Olivos et al., 2012). As Patel and Stevens (2010) described, the

purpose to the PAC program, as articulated by the program administrator, is to create

"more collaboration and partnerships" with parents through addressing the needs that

they describe for themselves. As Guo (2010) indicated, the establishment of parent

committees with bilingual members to collaborate with parents and staff acts to limit the

hindrances to family collaboration with the schools. Riojas-Cortez and Flores (2009)

noted that these committees also facilitate increased understanding of the expectations of

the American school system which in turn further supports and encourages parental

involvement within the schools. Furthermore, schools who have established regular,

multimodal, multilingual communications to help CLD parents navigate the unfamiliar

waters of American schools foster more positive home-school collaborations than those

that do not (Panferov, 2010). The PAC program holds monthly parent presentations

through the school year with an extension component, Parent's University, held during

the summer. The program administrator articulated making many attempts to ensure that parents are included into the decision making process of the program and has extended the program in response to parent desire and need.

Responding to these desires and needs goes a long way to cultivating strong relationships with the parents who participate in this program. The program administrator articulated the importance of forming relationships with the families to facilitate a program more targeted toward meeting the needs of those parents. As stated by Tellez and Waxman (2010), it is important to establish a greater connection to these families to better meet their needs. To this end, the program administrator described evolving methods to best communicate with parents to both inform them of program sessions and communicate information to them. She stated that initially, the program utilized bilingual flyers that were sent either through the mail or through student backpacks from school. This evolved to personal phone calls made to parents by parent volunteers in response to the fact that not all parents were comfortable with reading and not all flyers were reaching their intended destinations. The program administrator described the importance of sending personal verbal messages to parents whose culture is "mostly about talking." These personal messages evolved to voicemails and text messages left in both English and Spanish for each parent for efficiency purposes. The evolution of these notifications reiterated the research conducted by Chen and Harris (2009) which found that interactions with parents being most effective when they extended beyond paper notifications.

Another factor noted by the program administrator to the success of the PAC program was the importance of including parents into the planning of it. As she described, parental involvement was contingent on parental buy-in to the program. The program administrator described a process for utilizing parental input to the creation of the program. She stated that she asks parents about when the PAC program sessions should be held to ensure optimal opportunity for attendance from parents based on their schedules, commitments, and ease of access to the programs. She also stated that she discusses with parents what other incentives should be provided to continue to encourage parents to attend. Specifically, she identified providing food, childcare, and homework support for children, free-of-charge to the parents as incentives which encourage parental involvement. Responding to parents' needs in this way speaks directly to the research conducted by Barrera and Liu (2006) regarding inhibited communication between CLD parents and schools as a result of limited access to transportation, demanding work schedules which conflict with school hours, limited child care, and family responsibilities.

Finally, the program administrator of this program noted an indicator of the program's success being increased self-advocacy from parents both within the program and within schools. She noted that the parents involved in this program have moved from defaulting to teachers and saying "whatever you say maestro" (the Spanish word for teacher) to speaking up in meetings with teachers to advocate for their children. As Gordon (1996) stated, in many cultures, parents do not have a role in the academic education of their children and therefore do not feel comfortable questioning the practices

of educators or being involved at school. The program administrator's observation of the need for parents to better understand the expectations of the American school system to become better advocates for themselves and their children reiterates this point. Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) also stated that it can be difficult for parents coming from different countries with different educational expectations to adapt to the expectations of American schools including the expectation to be physically present, actively participate on parent organizations, communicate with educators in person through conferences, and actively support their children's learning through homework support. Through their research, they found that in some cases, parents are hesitant to fulfill these roles due to unfamiliarity with the expectations and fear of interfering with academic lessons being taught. For these parents who are less-confident in participating in schools as the American school system expects, they often defer to educators. In other countries, where the expectations of parents are to abstain from in-school participation, educators unilaterally make educational decisions for children without the consultation of parents. For parents who are less-familiar with the American school system this continues to be their expectation for the role of educators (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Borrero et al., 2009; Gordon, 1996).

The results of this study determined that at the time this study was conducted, this program was implemented with fidelity, though the program was constantly evolving to best meet the needs of its parent participants.

Research Question 2

To What Extent is the PAC Program Accomplishing its Established Goals?

Evidence from the administrator interview, parent focus group, post-presentation survey, and teacher survey indicated that the program has been effective to educating parents about the American school system and programs available to their children. Throughout the literature regarding the importance of educating parents about the American education system is the need for parents to be well informed to act as advocates for their children and to have a voice in the educational decision making process for their children which is their legal right within schools (Chavez-Reyes, n.d.; Johnson et al., 2005; Olivos et al., 2012). The findings of this study corroborate the research stating the importance of using familial input to guiding such a program to increase involvement and buy-in. Through soliciting input from families to guide the implementation of the PAC program, the program administrator ameliorates a compounding factor impacting parental support of their children's education which is their uncertainty of knowing where to obtain information to assist their children (Barrera & Liu, 2006; Olivos et al., 2012).

Informing Parents about Academic Programs

The results of this study indicate that the PAC program successfully accomplished its goal of educating parents about the academic programs available to students at school which was consistent with the literature regarding how best to educate parents about the American education system. The federal mandate to implement a program to educate parents about educational programs available to ELL students is intended to help parents

become more involved in their child's education for students to succeed in school (Johnson et al., 2005). The goal of the legal mandate is not only to educate parents about educational programming available to students enrolled in TBE programs but also to empower CLD parents to become greater advocates for their children's education (Chavez-Reyes, n.d.). Every parent has a right to participate in making educational decisions for their children. To do so, parents must be knowledgeable about the educational options available to their children (Olivos et al., 2012). As the administrator of this program stated in her interview with the researcher of this study, the PAC program was initially established to meet the legal mandate; however, it quickly evolved into more. The importance to establishing a program to educate parents about the American school system, recognized by the program administrator, is supported in the literature as a component to ensuring that parents feel part of their students' education ("Tips to create successful ELL programs," 2011). The administrator explained that she views a mark of success of this program to be when parents become greater advocates for themselves and their children, which, she stated has begun to take place more and more. She stated that parents are beginning to speak up during educational meetings for their children and ask questions about educational programs and what more can be done to support students. The program administrator's observations are consistent with the literature in that the benefit of this outreach minimizes miscommunications between schools and parents to foster more uninhibited communication (Hirsto, 2010). However, as stated by Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005), it is also possible that parental attendance at PAC program sessions increased their comfort in interacting with teachers and administrators, which in

turn influenced their comfort in being more vocal at meetings with teachers more so than an increased understanding of the American school system.

Educating Parents about Areas of Concern

The results of this study addressed an area of need within the literature in that they stated that in addition to educating parents about academic programs available to their students, the PAC program sought to educate parents about areas of concern they had regarding their parenting of students within the American school system. A compounding factor impacting parental support of their children's education is their uncertainty of knowing where to obtain information to assist their children (Barrera & Liu, 2006; Olivos et al., 2012). Both the program administrator interview and parent focus group responses indicated the PAC program has provided parents with resources beyond what educational programming is available to students at school which has supported their parenting practices at home and understanding of student lives. The parents who participated in the parent focus group specifically identified benefit from learning what it is like to be a student at school. The hope is that through programs that bridge the cultural divide between home and school, parents will become more invested in their children's education as they learn more about schools in the United States (Wood et al., 2006).

According to the literature, one way to bridge the cultural divide between home and school is the establishment of culturally sensitive parent groups. ESL parent committees with bilingual members to collaborate with parents and staff have been shown to increase parent understanding of school expectations, to meet the needs of

families, and to increase family collaboration with schools (Guo, 2010; Riojas-Cortez &

Flores, 2009). These programs created by schools educate CLD parents about how

American schools operate and the educational programs available to parents and students

(e.g., bilingual education, special education, etc.) (Ochoa & Rhodes, 2005), and they

provide parents with information and provide an opportunity for questions to be

answered. These explanations of the utility of parent education programs correlate to the

findings of this research study. The program administrator of the PAC program stated

that the PAC program educates parents about educational programs available to students

per legal mandate; however, it also provides an environment where parents are able to

ask questions and find answers. The program administrator stated that parents will

approach her to ask about a variety of issues ranging from educational questions to

assistive services questions (for things such as rent and utilities) for which she does her

best to answer or else helps the parents to find answers, in Spanish, which will be of use

to them. Ultimately, parents self-reported a greater sense of confidence enabling them to

be more involved in the schools and vocal advocates for their children. They reported that

this confidence stems from the information provided to them through their participation

in the PAC program but also from knowing who to approach with questions and the

support they receive in finding answers to their questions.

Facilitating Better Home-School-Community Relations

An expectation of the American school system is for parents to be actively

involved in their children's education both at school and at home. To play an active role

in the education of their children, parents must communicate with educators. As

Waterman (2007) stated, parent programs support policies and federal law by emphasizing the importance of involving parents in the educational process for their children. Furthermore, students whose parents hold higher academic achievement expectations have greater academic success than do those whose parents do not clearly define their expectations (Tellez & Waxman, 2010). In addition to not knowing the expectations of the American school system with regard to the extent to be involved in their children's education, many parents also are unsure of how to be involved or feel as though they are unable to be involved (Langdon, 2008). Responses from the parent focus group of this study identified the PAC program as helping parents to better understand how to be involved in the academics of their children. The parents described a number of examples, particularly better understanding how to access student grades and better understanding how those grades are derived to better support students at home.

The parents who participated in the parent focus group also stated that although they felt better equipped to interact with the schools, and that they had changed their practices with regard to interacting with their students' educators, parents reported the schools did not alter how they communicated with these parents. Gordon (1996) cautioned educators to not allow interactions with students, who acculturate more rapidly than their parents, to influence their interactions with parents because by doing so, the communication gap between educators and parents is widened. Another factor which leaves parents uninformed or unfamiliar with the expectations of the American school system is the lack of communication between schools and parents. A study by Patel and Stevens (2010) illustrated the discrepancy in communications received from schools by

natively English speaking parents compared to parents whose dominant language was

Spanish. These miscommunications often leave parents unfamiliar with their rights and

the expectations of schools regarding how to be involved in their children's education. As

a result, these parents often do not attend scheduled meetings with school staff which

further impairs the parent-school relationship (Minnema et al., 2006). The parents who

participated in this research study's parent focus group expressed a greater understanding

of educational programming at the schools which they credited to information provided

by the PAC program more so than from their children's educators at the schools. The

parents stated that this greater understanding helps them to feel more a part of their

children's educational experience and more confident in interacting with the schools.

These responses suggested the PAC program reaches out to parents effectively to educate

them about American schools which help them to feel a stronger connection to their

children's education. After all, a key element to students making progress at school is

ensuring that parents feel part of their student's education through outreach ("Tips to

create successful ELL programs," 2011), based upon the findings from the parent focus

group, the PAC program is providing that outreach within this school district. Ultimately,

the result of CLD parents becoming more familiar with American school systems and

how they function is their becoming greater participants in the educational lives of their

children (Wood et al., 2006). However, results from the staff survey indicate a disconnect

between what the parents who participate in the PAC program believe and how their

actions are perceived by staff. The perceptions of the staff members are consistent with

the literature in that they indicated a discrepancy between parental involvement and

expectations within the schools that have not been unanimously noted as ameliorated as a result of educating parents about the American education system. The results of the teacher survey indicate there is still room for improvement with regard to the impact of the parents' stated increased confidence and understanding of the schools and the resulting impact on their interactions within the schools.

As indicated by Panferov (2010), even with greater understanding of the American school system, CLD parents do not always feel confident in interacting with the schools. Parents often feel disempowered to assist their children academically due to language barriers. The parents through the parent focus group and the program administrator through the administrator interview indicated the PAC program has supported parents to feel a greater sense of confidence in supporting their students and interacting with schools. One parent reported a sense of security in knowing that the PAC program is there to support parents when they have questions and are unsure of how to find the answers they need to better support their children. These findings were commensurate with the research of Gordon (1996) which indicated that programs geared toward supporting parents and informing them about the American school system translated to increased supports at home provided to students and greater parent confidence in communicating with schools.

Research Question 3

Are Parent Perceptions of the PAC Program Influencing the Program's Delivery?

To mitigate miscommunications between schools and parents and enhance communication, culturally sensitive and respectful resources should be made available to

families to aid support of their children (Hirsto, 2010). Both the program administrator

and parents reported the influence of parent input on the PAC program as being

influential to how the program is implemented. The program administrator reported

soliciting input from PAC participants to determining what topics program sessions

would cover as well as when those sessions would take place. The parent participants

also reported that the PAC program utilized their input to determining the itinerary of

program sessions. They both indicated that parents helped to select topics of interest to

add to the schedule of events, to schedule program sessions, and to influence how

program sessions would run. Through parents having a heavy influence on the program,

it enables culturally insensitive practices to be minimized and for parents, of the same

culture, to be more comfortable with the program's practices. Therefore, this evaluation

determined that parent perspectives do influence the implementation of the PAC

program. The parents also stated that they are confident in knowing who to approach with

questions regarding information coming from the schools which minimizes

miscommunications between schools and parents (Hirsto, 2010).

In addition to parental influence on the PAC program ensuring cultural sensitivity,

parents also affect the itinerary of delivered content which aligns to existing research. As

Waterman (2007) suggested, it is important to learn what parents already know and what

they want to know to avoid assuming that all CLD parents are ignorant to all aspects of

the American school system. The program administrator advocates for the program to be

guided and influenced by parent participants and therefore consistently refers to parents

about what knowledge is already held and therefore what parents would benefit from

learning more about. Guo and Mohan (2008) stated it is imperative for parent programs to include and collaborate with parents, as parental input is important to students receiving quality education. By providing parents with the opportunity to help determine the schedule of topics to be covered by the PAC program through parent surveys and the steering committee, the program ensures that topics being addressed are useful to parents. According to the parent focus groups and post-presentation surveys, parents find the content presented through PAC program sessions to be useful, informative, and interesting.

In other similar programs to the one evaluated through this research study, parents were able to discuss problems they encountered regarding parenting and the education of their children. They also were provided with information about local resources and English literacy skills. The result of those programs were parents expressing greater abilities in communicating with their children's teachers, assisting their children at home with homework assignments, and communicating directly with schools to access information about their children's progress in school (Gordon, 1996). This research study had similar findings. Parents expressed feeling increased confidence in talking with teachers and school personnel and also being provided with the "correct words to say" as a result of the PAC program. They also reported feelings of increased familiarity with community resources and having specific staff members they feel comfortable approaching with questions or problems affecting their parenting or their children's education.

Not only did the parent participants of this study who attend PAC program sessions report increased familiarity with community resources, but overwhelmingly positive sentiments regarding the efficacy of the program. They also reported an influencing factor to the decision of parents to attend the PAC program sessions as potentially being attributed to the influence parents have over the program schedule. As Sheldon (2005) reported in his research, school outreach increases family and community involvement at school. He also stated that it is important for schools to ameliorate the obstacles that impede involvement. Both parent participants and the program administrator reported the solicitation of parental input regarding not only the scheduling of program topics but also when sessions should be held, whether childcare with homework support should be provided, and whether dinner should be provided to encourage attendance to the program sessions. This outreach on the behalf of the PAC program likely influences parental decisions regarding involvement in the educational lives of their children (Epstein, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Simon, 2004). Furthermore, the expansion of the PAC program from only educating parents about the legally required topics intended to educate parents about the American education system demonstrates effort on the behalf of the schools to include them. As a result, parents are more likely to become more involved in the school culture (Sheldon, 2005).

The parent participants of this study did state an increase in communication and involvement in the education of their children as a result of their participation in the PAC program. This endorsement is supported in the literature in that parental involvement in programs designed for facilitating family involvement in schools directly led to parental

reports of improvement in the frequency of contact with schools and the relationships held with staff members (O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014). Furthermore by participating in the PAC program and becoming better acquainted with district staff members, the program participants increase their comfort in interacting with school staff members which increases their involvement at school (O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014). It is also possible that through increased familiarity with the American school system, parents became more confident (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005) which led to the reported increased participation in educational planning meetings for students by parents discussed by the program administrator.

Research Question 4

How Do Teachers Perceive the PAC Program's Influence Within Their Classrooms?

Overall, the findings of this evaluation indicate that teachers perceive parents who participated in the PAC program increased their involvement in the education of their children. However, the findings were inconclusive as to whether or not the PAC program increased communications between parents and the schools. Therefore, the teachers who responded to the teacher survey utilized in this research study indicated that they see some positive influence from the PAC program within their classrooms. These findings align to the research in that through parental education about the American education system, parents increase their involvement however much of the engagement takes place at home more so than at school (O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014).

In other research studies, parental involvement also increased at school (O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014). To determine the level of influence the PAC program had

on the classrooms within the district, a survey was issued to the teachers of the district.

The results of this survey were varied and limited. Some of the teachers who responded

to this survey indicated an increase in correspondence with teachers; however, an equal

number indicated less correspondence. The majority of respondents to this survey did

endorse that the PAC program is meeting its goals or that they perceive an increase in

involvement by PAC program participants within their classrooms. This is consistent

with literature that states that parents who are familiar with the expectations of American

schools are more likely to be active within those schools (Cline & Necochea, 2004;

Wood et al., 2006). They also noted that parents who are unfamiliar with these

expectations typically do not engage with schools in a consistent manner. Notably, the

parents from this study reported an increased understanding of and comfort with the

American education system. However the staff respondents to the teacher survey reported

discrepant findings indicating not all staff members have noted an increase in activity

within schools as a result of parental increased understanding of schools. As noted by

Harper and Pelletier (2010), involvement in a student's education is not limited to

volunteering in their classrooms or assisting with homework, it also includes written or

verbal communication with teachers regularly. However, teachers commonly initiate

communication with parents over the phone, during parent-teacher conferences, open

houses, written notes home, or in informal meetings at school (Minnema et al., 2006)

which require command of the same language which, for teachers, is most commonly

English. Furthermore, educators often limit communication with parents through setting

communication times, such as conferences, at times when parents are unavailable or

through not allowing substantial time for parents to have their questions answered (Manz et al., 2009) which could be a reason why teachers within this study indicated increased involvement within their classrooms though were not unanimous in their endorsement of increased communication of PAC program participants.

As reported by Barrera and Liu (2006), communication between parents and schools is often inhibited due to limited access to transportation, demanding work schedules, limited child care, family responsibilities, and limited access to translation services. The PAC program addresses these obstacles, however, communicating directly with schools the obstacles remain in place. Missed attempts to communicate are not uncommon amongst the CLD population with school staff members due to language barriers (Chen & Harris, 2009; Laosa 2003; Panferov, 2010; Previdi et al., 2005). Parental reports did not report negative sentiments regarding the perceived consistency regarding the communication methods utilized by the schools in communicating with parents. However, research suggests that these ineffectual communications can result in parents feeling unheard by schools and disempowered (Good, Masewicz, & Vogel, 2010; Panferov, 2010).

Limitations

As with any research study, this program evaluation has limitations that impact the generalizability of the results to other programs. The most significant limitation to this study was the small size of the research study. This program evaluation was limited to one program working with a specific population of parents. Therefore, the results of this evaluation are only applicable to other similar populations. Specifically, this

evaluation assessed a program which works with Latino parents, primarily of Mexican

decent. As a result, the findings of this research study are directly applicable to similar

programs that work with parents primarily of Mexican decent.

Similarly, the generalizability of this evaluation is limited due to the small sample

size of research participants who participated in this study. A total of 29 participants

provided information for this study. One program administrator, 21 district staff

members, and seven parents participated in this research study providing responses to

interviews, focus groups, and surveys. Those who responded to the surveys administered

did not respond to every question. Therefore the data collected through this evaluation is

limited to very few respondents.

Another limitation of this research study was the intent to identify trends in

attendance data as a means of describing how the program is implemented and to support

parental reports of perceptions of the program. The researcher of this study requested all

documents maintained by the PAC program, including attendance documents, as part of

the document analysis. However, attendance records were not supplied. It is possible that

the PAC program does not store documentation of participant attendance. It is also

possible that these documents were not provided to the researcher but are stored by the

PAC program. Regardless, this study was unable to document trends in attendance data.

Additionally, the lack of research conducted surrounding the influence parent

organizations have on parents limits this study. The researcher was unable to situate the

results of this study into the conversation of the literature as neither commensurate nor

discrepant as a result. Therefore the results of this evaluation cannot be deemed typical

nor atypical with regard to the impact the PAC program had on parents who participate in program sessions. The literature indicated that outreach programs are effective to increasing parent involvement at school (Epstein, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014; Sheldon, 2005; Simon, 2004). However, it does not describe the influence these programs have on parental perceptions, parental involvement within the programs, or the influence these programs have on communication parents have with schools.

Furthermore, participants who choose to give their opinions and tell about their experiences typically feel strongly about the area they are providing information about. In the case of this program evaluation, the participants who chose to participate felt strongly about the positive influences the PAC program has on parents. Therefore, the results of responses by parent participants demonstrated a positive bias regarding the PAC program. As a result, it is possible that the findings of this evaluation have been skewed to the positive because participants with more neutral or negative opinions or experiences of the program did not consent to participate.

Another limitation of this evaluation was the reliance the researcher had on the program administrator. Documents analyzed for this evaluation were supplied by the program administrator. Although the researcher requested all documents collected by the program to analyze for this evaluation, she was reliant on the program administrator and staff to supply her with those documents and therefore may not have received all existing documentation rather only the documentation the administrator deemed relevant or wanted analyzed.

Lastly, the scope of this evaluation considered the perceptions of educators and parent participants, however, this program also stated the intention to increase relations parent participants have with the community. The perceptions of the effectiveness of this program to improving relations with community organizations held by members of those community organizations were not evaluated. The perceptions held by the program administrator and parent participants of the effectiveness of the PAC program to improving relations with the community were evaluated, however those perceptions were one-sided.

Despite the limitations of this study, the findings are considered relevant and important to this field of study and open the door to further research in this area.

Implications for Future Research

The purpose to this evaluation was to determine the effectiveness of the PAC program to meeting its established goals which would reinforce the utility of the legal mandate for a school district to have such a program to receive federal and state funding to support their TBE programs (Statuatory Authority: No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Title 1, Part A, Sec. 112(g)(1)(A), Title III, Part C, Sec. 3302, and Title IX, Part A, Sec. 9101 as cited in Johnson et al., 2005). The results of this evaluation were positive and indicated that this program is effective to meeting the needs of its program participants. This study alone is insufficient to determine whether the requirement to create such programs in other districts would demonstrate similar positive results. Therefore, continued research in this area is imperative to determine whether the legal mandate to have programs to educate parents about the American school system is effective to

providing parents with the information necessary to be knowledgeable and active in their students' education.

Another area for future research to attempt to fill the gap in the literature is with larger populations of parents to increase the generalizability of results of similar research. Current research focusing on existing programs intended to educate parents about the American school system center on small programs who facilitate community involvement (Gordon, 1996; Montgomery, 2009), acclimation to the United States (Waterman, 2007), competency in supporting students educationally (Previdi et al., 2005), and English language development in parents ("Action Recommended for California ELLs," 2010). They leave out large scale analyses of programs intending to provide generalizable results across diverse groups of CLD parents and programs with large numbers of intended participants. The implications of this study apply to small programs comprised of Spanish speaking, primarily of Mexican decent, program participants with the intent of educating participants about the American education system and areas of concern to support their parenting. Future research should the evaluation of multiple programs with a larger numbers of research participants and addressing the needs of diverse groups of CLD parents.

The PAC program's expressed intent is to facilitate better home-school-community relations. The research pertinent to this study focused on parents and schools but is silent regarding community organization interactions with parents and schools. Future research should aim to fill this void by evaluating the perceptions held by community organizations regarding the utility of similar programs and whether parental

involvement with community organizations increased as a result of participation in such

programs.

The results of this evaluation emphasized an increase in parental self-advocacy as

a result of their participation in the PAC program. This important consequence of such a

parent education program was not known of prior to the evaluation of the PAC program

through this research study, as a result it was not a measured dimension of the PAC

program's influence. Future research should investigate further the effect of parent

education of the American school system on parental self-advocacy within schools as

well as within such programs.

Implications for Practice

The results of this evaluation identified qualities of the PAC program which could

be useful to the development or modification of other similar programs in other districts.

It also identified areas for improvement for the PAC program which could be useful to

other programs as well.

The program administrator of the PAC program identified the best method for

inviting and informing parents of program sessions was through word of mouth. As she

explained, this was in part because of the cultural affinity toward conversation over

written notifications. The parents who participated in this evaluation also stated that the

verbal communications between program staff and other participants were advantageous

to them. Therefore, the results of this research study suggest other programs would

benefit from using verbal communication, or communication methods preferred by the

cultures represented within the program, to inform parents of program sessions and content.

Also imperative to the success of the PAC program evaluated through this research study was the input solicited and utilized from parents. The PAC program ensured cultural sensitivity and utility of program sessions by asking parents what topics, beyond those mandated by law should be addressed. The parent participants unanimously expressed enjoyment of program sessions and finding the content of those sessions to be useful. The parents also reported that a reason that they continue to attend sessions is because of the input they have to planning the program sessions. The program administrator also stated that parental involvement and participation in the PAC program sessions has increased over time. She stated at the time of this research study that she had parents who participate in planning and implementing program sessions. Therefore, the results of this evaluation indicate to have a successful program, parental input should be solicited and utilized.

The program administrator of this program also stated the benefit to providing a free meal and childcare to parent participants to encourage attendance to program sessions. The parent participants also reported their enjoyment of these supports, although one parent indicated this could inhibit participation from some parents who do not want to be perceived by others as needing a free meal from the program. Ultimately, the results from this evaluation suggest that providing these incentives which would otherwise inhibit parental participation as potentially beneficial practices for other programs.

However, as Wanat (2010) indicated through his research, educating parents about the American school system is insufficient to changing parental involvement in schools. His research stated that schools must also change to facilitate parental involvement. The results of this evaluation indicated that parents developed a better understanding of the American school system through their involvement with the PAC program. The parents stated that they increased their involvement with the schools however did not perceive a change in communication from the schools. Results from the teacher survey concurred that those who responded to the survey perceived an increase in involvement in the schools by PAC program participants however responses did not indicate an overall increase in communication from these parents. The results of this evaluation suggest that other programs should facilitate communication between parents and educators until parents feel comfortable acting on their own. One obstacle that the PAC program does not support parents in overcoming is the language barrier between parents and school staff members. Other programs have found success in providing English language lessons to parents through their parental education programs. The results of this evaluation suggest such lessons could be useful in encouraging and increasing parental communication with schools.

Both the program administrator as well as parent participants expressed a desire to expand the PAC program to meet the needs of other parents within the school district. The program administrator expressed a challenge in meeting the needs of other CLD populations within the district as being the lack of cultural representation of the target population within the staff of the school district. She stated that to gain buy-in and

participation of parents, it helps to have staff members who are familiar with the cultural customs of the targeted population. Other programs would benefit from staffing their parent education programs with diverse individuals who are familiar with the customs of their targeted parent populations.

Lastly, the results of this evaluation indicated parents benefit from the resources proved by the PAC program. The parents reported that the PAC program contacts parents to inform them about community resources they may benefit from. Neither the parents nor the program administrator reported the PAC program as providing information to parents about how to locate their own resources. It is helpful to provide parents with resources, however, parents would also benefit from learning how to locate resources for themselves.

Implications for the Future Practice of the PAC Program

The results of this evaluation demonstrated a discrepancy between what the program administrator articulates as the procedure for determining program session determination and that which is perceived by parent participants of the PAC program. The program administrator articulated the utilization of a parent participant steering committee to determine what topics would be presented, when program sessions would be held, and the procedures for program sessions to be laid out the spring before the upcoming school year. She articulated that sessions needed to be determined well in advance of the upcoming school year for the purposes of informing the state grant committee to receive funding for the district's TBE program. Parents, however, stated that parents asked what content they would like presented a month in advance of the

upcoming session. They stated that their completion of surveys at one session night

dictated the content that would be presented at the next session. A document analysis of

documents provided to the researcher of this study by the program administrator

indicated that a survey is administered annually to determine what session content parents

would like to learn more information about. It would behoove the PAC program to clarify

to parents how their input is utilized with regard to determining PAC program session

content.

The program administrator of this program stated the desire to expand the PAC

program to other populations of CLD parents within the district. The parent participants

of this program also articulated a desire for the PAC program to "continue with more

people, not just us." It is important to meet the goals of the program, to educate parents of

the district about the American education system and areas of concern with regard to

parenting, addressing the needs of all parents in the district. Lessons learned through the

establishment of the PAC program targeting Latino parents of the district can be applied

to other populations within the district. As before mentioned, the program has learned

that staffing the program with staff familiar with and potentially identifying with the

target population and to utilize communication methods that are culturally preferred to

establish such a program has proven successful for the PAC program currently and

should be applied as a first step to including other demographics as well.

The program administrator and parent participants of this research study also

discussed parents benefiting from the resources provided by the PAC program. The

parents articulated that program staff informs them of resources available to support

parents and their children. The program administrator reiterated this point by stating that community resources are passed onto parents through PAC program sessions and that when approached by parents with concerns, the PAC program staff connect parents with appropriate resources, including community resources. However, throughout this study, neither the parents nor the program administrator articulated providing parents with the education of where to find resources for themselves which enables parents to remain dependent on program staff and inhibit their independence.

A final recommendation for next steps for the PAC program pertains to facilitated communication between parents and schools. The results of this study indicate that the PAC program has been successful to increasing parental involvement in the educational lives of their students. However, the results of this study were varied with regard to parental communication with teachers. An equal number of teachers who responded to the teacher survey administered through this study stated a perceived increase as decrease in parental communication with teachers of parents who participate in the PAC program. Therefore, a next step for this program would be facilitating increased communication between staff and parents. It is possible that an inhibiting factor to communication continues to be a language barrier between parents and school staff. Therefore, lessons to increase competency in English, the language of instruction in schools and spoken by all staff members, may help to facilitate increased communication between parents and school staff, as was the case in California at the Foothill City Middle School ("Action Recommended for California ELLs," 2010).

Conclusion

This program evaluation sought to determine (1) whether the PAC program was implemented with fidelity, (2) to what extent the PAC program was accomplishing its established goals of informing parents about the academic programs available to their students in school, educating parents about areas of concern they have with regard to their children, and facilitating better home-school-community relations, (3) whether parent perceptions of the PAC program influence the program's delivery, and (4) how teachers perceive the PAC program's influence within their classrooms. The overall results of this research study support the legal mandate of requiring TBE programs to establish programs to educate CLD parents about the American education system. However, further research should be conducted in this area to determine the overall effectiveness of such programs to supporting the needs of CLD parents. The results of this evaluation help fill the gap in the literature surrounding the legal mandate requiring school districts to establish parent education programs to familiarize CLD parents with the American school system.

APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

Tuesday, April 5, 2016

Dear Alison Alves,

On Tuesday, March 10, 2015 the Loyola University Chicago Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and approved your Initial application for the project titled "**The Parent Advisory Council for Spanish-Speaking Parents: A Program Evaluation**". Based on the information you provided, the IRB determined that:

- the risks to subjects are minimized through (i) the utilization of procedures consistent with sound research design and do not unnecessarily expose participants to risk, and (ii) whenever appropriate, the research utilizes procedures already being performed on the subjects for diagnostic or treatment purposes
- the risks to participants are reasonable in relation to anticipated benefits, if any, to participants, and the importance of the knowledge that may reasonably be expected to result
- the selection of subjects is equitable
- informed consent be sought from each prospective subject or the subject's legally authorized representative, in accordance with, and to the extent required by Â§46.116
- informed consent be appropriately documented, in accordance with, and to the extent required by Â§46.117
- when appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of subjects
- when appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of data
- when some or all of the subjects are likely to be vulnerable to coercion or undue influence, such as children, prisoners, pregnant women, mentally disabled persons, or economically or educationally disadvantaged persons, additional safeguards have been included in the study to protect the rights and welfare of these subjects

Documented consent will be obtained from all subjects enrolled.

This review procedure, administered by the IRB, in no way absolves you, the researcher, from the obligation to adhere to all Federal, State, and local laws and the Loyola University Chicago policies. Immediately inform the IRB if you would like to change aspects of your approved project (please consult our website for specific instructions). You, the researcher, are respectfully reminded that the University's ability to support its researchers in litigation is dependent upon conformity with continuing approval for their work.

Please notify the IRB of completion of this research and/or departure from the Loyola University Chicago by submitting a Project Closure Report using the CAP system. In all correspondence with the IRB regarding this project, please refer to IRB project number #1658 or IRB application number #3093.

The IRB approval granted for this project expires on **3/10/2016 12:00:00 AM**

If you have any questions regarding this approval, the IRB, or the Loyola University Chicago Human Subject Protection Program, please phone the Assistant Director for Research Compliance at (773) 508-2689 or email the IRB at irb@luc.edu.

Best wishes for your research,

Raymond H. Dye, Jr., Ph.D.
Chairperson, Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX B

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD CONTINUED APPROVAL LETTER

Tuesday, April 5, 2016

Dear Alison Alves,

On Friday, January 15, 2016 the Loyola University Chicago Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and approved your Continuing Review application for the project titled "**The Parent Advisory Council for Spanish-Speaking Parents: A Program Evaluation**". Based on the information you provided, the IRB determined that:

- the risks to subjects are minimized through (i) the utilization of procedures consistent with sound research design and do not unnecessarily expose participants to risk, and (ii) whenever appropriate, the research utilizes procedures already being performed on the subjects for diagnostic or treatment purposes
- the risks to participants are reasonable in relation to anticipated benefits, if any, to participants, and the importance of the knowledge that may reasonably be expected to result
- the selection of subjects is equitable
- informed consent be sought from each prospective subject or the subject's legally authorized representative, in accordance with, and to the extent required by §46.116
- informed consent be appropriately documented, in accordance with, and to the extent required by §46.117
- when appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of subjects
- when appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of data
- when some or all of the subjects are likely to be vulnerable to coercion or undue influence, such as children, prisoners, pregnant women, mentally disabled persons, or economically or educationally disadvantaged persons, additional safeguards have been included in the study to protect the rights and welfare of these subjects

Documented consent will be obtained from all subjects enrolled.
This review procedure, administered by the IRB, in no way absolves you, the researcher, from the obligation to adhere to all Federal, State, and local laws and the Loyola University Chicago policies. Immediately inform the IRB if you would like to change aspects of your approved project (please consult our website for specific instructions). You, the researcher, are respectfully reminded that the University's ability to support its researchers in litigation is dependent upon conformity with continuing approval for their work.

Please notify the IRB of completion of this research and/or departure from the Loyola University Chicago by submitting a Project Closure Report using the CAP system. In all correspondence with the IRB regarding this project, please refer to IRB project number

#1658 or IRB application number #3747.
The IRB approval granted for this project expires on **1/15/2017 12:00:00 AM**

If you have any questions regarding this approval, the IRB, or the Loyola University Chicago Human Subject Protection Program, please phone the Assistant Director for Research Compliance at (773) 508-2689 or email the IRB at irb@luc.edu.

Best wishes for your research,

Raymond H. Dye, Jr., Ph.D.
Chairperson, Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX C

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Project Title: The Parent Advisory Council for Spanish- Speaking Parents: A Program Evaluation
Researcher: Alison Alves
Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Gina Coffee

Introduction:
You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Alison Alves for a dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Gina Coffee in the Department of School Psychology at Loyola University of Chicago.

You are being asked to participate because of your participation in the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) program.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

Purpose:
The purpose of this study is to answer the following questions:
1. Is the PAC program delivered with integrity?
2. To what extent is the PAC program accomplishing its established goals of informing parents about the academic programs available to their students in school, educating parents about areas of concern they have with regard to their children, and facilitating better home-school-community relations?
3. Are parent perceptions of the PAC program influencing the program's delivery?
4. How do teachers perceive the PAC program's influence within their classrooms?

The results of this study will be used to improve the PAC program. They will also, potentially, help other schools to make or change similar programs.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to:
- Complete a short, 5 minute, survey following the presentations you attend about your thoughts and experiences during the presentations. You will be asked to do this after two presentations.
- Participate in a 1 hour focus group to discuss your experiences with and thoughts about the program. The focus group will be scheduled on the same day, before an already scheduled PAC program presentation. You will be asked to come to this focus group through a phone call and a paper letter sent through the mail.

- Come to a 30 minute meeting to discuss the information learned from the focus group session. During this meeting you will have the opportunity to change information gathered by the researchers to be sure it is correct.
- Give permission for the researchers of this study to look at documents gathered by the program administrators that may contain information such as your name, address, or thoughts and feelings about the programs.

Risks/Benefits:
There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.

There are no direct benefits guaranteed to the participants of this study. However, the results of this evaluation will be used to make changes to and improve the current PAC program. These changes will in turn benefit you as a PAC program participant. This study also has potential benefits for participants of other similar programs which will be changed or made because of this research. Another potential benefit from this research, although it is not a direct benefit to the participants of this PAC program but to parents of students enrolled in transitional bilingual education programs across the country. This study will add to research surrounding the required programs that educate parents of students in transitional bilingual education programs. Until now, these programs have not been evaluated.

Compensation:
After completing the surveys which will be issued at two of the program presentations, you will receive a coupon for a free pizza at a local pizzeria. You will have the opportunity to receive one voucher per night when the surveys are distributed. This coupon will be given to you if you complete a survey, you are not required to participate in any other part of the study to receive a coupon. If you choose to no longer participate in the study, your coupon will not be taken away.

Confidentiality:
- Focus group data will be stored on a secure, password protected, computer-based, cloud server called Dropbox. Only the lead researcher (Alison Alves) will have the password to this server. She will grant access to the research assistant (Jessie Montes De Oca) to the audio recordings of the focus groups and the transcription of the focus groups. All information gathered during the focus group will be confidential, your name and identity will not be tied to the responses gathered.
- All data gathered through this study will be coded without names or identities of program participants to protect your confidentiality.
- Only the lead researcher (Alison Alves) and her research assistants (Jessie Montes De Oca) will have access to data gathered through this program evaluation.
- All audio recordings gathered through focus groups will be uploaded to a secure, password protected, computer-based, cloud server, called Dropbox, only

accessible to the lead researcher (Alison Alves) and her research assistants (Jessie Montes de Oca).

- All data sources (transcriptions and surveys) will be destroyed five years following the defense of this study. The audio recordings will be deleted from their recording device immediately following their being uploaded to a secure computer-based server. The audio recordings will be destroyed from the secure computer-based server immediately following the defense of this study.

- Although participants will be asked to use randomized numbers, not linked to the identities of participants, during focus groups, the researchers cannot control or predict the responses of participants. Identifying information could be shared by participants of the study. This information will not be used in the study and will only be accessible to the lead researcher and her research assistants through a secure, password protected, computer-based cloud server called Dropbox.

Voluntary Participation:
Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without consequences. Any decision not to participate or to withdraw from participation will not affect your relationship or interactions with PAC program administrators or the school district your students attend in the future.

Contacts and Questions:
If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to contact Alison Alves at 978-549-4903 or alison.j.alves@gmail.com as the lead researcher on this study. Alison is a graduate student at Loyola University completing this evaluation as part of a dissertation research study as part of the requirements to complete her degree. With questions for her faculty sponsor, contact Dr. Gina Coffee at gcoffee@luc.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Do you consent to participate in a 1 hour focus group?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Do you consent to attend a 30 minute meeting to talk about the information from the focus group?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Do you consent to complete one, 5 minute, survey after two program presentations (a total of two surveys)?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Do you consent to let the researcher (Alison Alves) review documents gathered by the PAC program that may contain your name and address?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

_____   _____

Participant's Signature   **Date**

_____   _____

Researcher's Signature   **Date**

APPENDIX D

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE

Focus Group Questionnaire

Welcome and thank you for coming. You were invited to be a part of this focus group because you gave consent to participate in a research study which is evaluating the effectiveness of the PAC program. The results of this study will be used to help the PAC program improve. These results may also help other schools to create programs like the PAC program to help parents. Your responses will be kept confidential. You were each given a number randomly when you entered the room. Please say your number before you respond to questions. After leaving this room, your responses will not be tied to you, they will be tied to your number. Please be honest and open with your responses as there will be no adverse effects to you as a result of your responses.

1) How did you find out about the PAC program sessions?
   a. Were they advertised?
2) How often do you attend? (Do you come every month or every so often)
   a. How do you choose which sessions you will attend?
3) What influences your decisions to attend sessions?
4) What kinds of information were you hoping to gain from the sessions?
   a. What kinds of information have you gained?
5) What have been your favorite sessions?
   a. What about these sessions made them your favorite?
6) What have been your least favorite sessions?
   a. What about these sessions did you dislike?
7) What sessions have you found most helpful?
   a. What was helpful about these sessions?
8) What sessions did you find the least helpful?
   a. What was unhelpful about these sessions?
9) Have these sessions impacted how you interact with the schools?
   a. How so?
10) Have these sessions impacted how interact with community resources/programs?
   a. How so?
11) Have these sessions impacted your understanding of school procedures/ programs?
   a. How so?
12) Do you think the schools interact with you differently now than before you started attending sessions?
   a. How so?
   b. Can you give examples?
13) What suggestions do you have, if any, to improve these program sessions for the future?
14) Do you plan to continue attending?
15) What do you hope to gain from these sessions in the future?

Thank you for your participation and your responses. The transcript from this focus group will be transcribed and saved in a secure computer location that will only be accessible by the researchers of this study. The responses will be analyzed. In 3 months, you will be invited to come back to meet with the researchers again to hear the results of the analysis of this focus group data so we can be sure we understood what you said to us. Thank you again for your participation. Enjoy the presentation tonight.

APPENDIX E

POST PRESENTATION SURVEY

Post Presentation Survey

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study. Please answer these questions based on the presentation you just participated in.

What was the topic of this session?

_____

Did this session cover what you thought it would cover?

_____

_____

_____

Was this session helpful to you?

_____

What information did you find helpful?

What information was not helpful?

Do you have any remaining questions about this topic?

_____

_____

Any additional comments?

_____

_____

_____

The results of this survey will be kept anonymous and saved in a secure location only accessible to the researchers of this study. The results of this survey will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the PAC program. This evaluation will be used to help program administrators improve the PAC program and help other schools to make programs and help parents.

APPENDIX F

ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Administrator Interview Questionnaire

The purpose of this interview is to learn more about how the PAC program is implemented and its function. Your responses will be analyzed along with other data from this study to evaluate the effectiveness of this program to its established goals. Please feel free to be open with your responses. This interview will be audio recorded. The recording will be uploaded to a secure, computer-based server that only the lead researcher of this study will have access to.

1. When did the program start?
2. For what reason?
3. What are the goals of the PAC program?
   a. To what extent have they been met or not?
4. Who was originally led the program?
   a. And now? What was the reason for the change in leadership?
5. Please describe how the program has been implemented.
   a. What have been the greatest successes of implementing the program?
   b. What have been the greatest challenges of implementing the program?
   c. How have those challenges been addressed?
6. How are the content and sequence of sessions determined?
   a. Do you follow a curriculum of any kind?
      i. Where have you obtained your curriculum information?
7. How has this program changed at all since its first creation?
8. How do you recruit participants?
9. What kinds of resources have you provided through this program?
10. What do you hope participants gain from the program?

Thank you for your responses. In two months time, you will be invited to meet again to review the findings of this interview to ensure accuracy.

APPENDIX G

DISTRICT TEACHER SURVEY

District Teacher Survey

This survey is part of a larger dissertation study evaluating the effectiveness of the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) and its impact on parental communication and collaboration within the schools. This survey is meant to reveal teacher perceptions of the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) program and its effectiveness. Responses to this survey will be kept completely anonymous. Results of this survey, if you are interested in viewing them, will be made available through the PAC program administrators. Thank you for your time and responses.

1) What is the purpose of the "Parent Advisory Council?"
2) Did any of your students' parents, during last year's school year, attend "Parent Advisory Council?"
   - ☐ yes
   - ☐ no
   - ☐ unknown

   If yes, how many?

   - ☐ 1-3
   - ☐ 4-6
   - ☐ 7-9
   - ☐ 10-12
   - ☐ 13-15
   - ☐ 16+
3) What topics are discussed during the "Parent Advisory Council" sessions?
   - ☐ ESL/ELL process
   - ☐ Grading/ Report Cards
   - ☐ Roles of school staff
   - ☐ Home Teaching Practices for Literacy
   - ☐ Home Teaching Practices for Math
   - ☐ Home Teaching Practices for Science
   - ☐ Home Teaching Practices for Social Studies
   - ☐ Home Teaching practices for Social Skills
   - ☐ Other _____

4) Parents who attend the "Parent Advisory Council…"

	Much More	More	Somewhat More	Same	Somewhat Less	Less	Much Less	I couldn't tell
… wrote notes to communicate with me								
… emailed to communicate with me								
… scheduled meetings to communicate with me								
… attended parent-teacher conferences								
… attended school events								
… were involved in their children's education								
… supported their children's education								

5) Have you had any participation with the "Parent Advisory Council" ☐ yes   ☐   no
   a. Please describe
6) What kind of information do you think the "Parent Advisory Council" should deliver?
7) To what extent do you think the "Parent Advisory Council" accomplishes the purpose it was designed for?
8) Which grades do you teach?
9) Which subjects do you teach? (check all that apply)
   - ☐   English
   - ☐   Math
   - ☐   Science
   - ☐   Social Studies
   - ☐   Art
   - ☐   Music
   - ☐   Gym/PE
   - ☐   Social Skills/Social Work
   - ☐   ESL/ELL
   - ☐   Other _____
10) How long have you been teaching?

APPENDIX H

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS INTEGRITY CHECKLIST

Document Analysis Integrity Checklist

Document Analysis Integrity Checklist:

- Interest inventory regarding parental requests for presentation topics

    o Do those topics appear in future agendas

- What documents have been gathered and included for this document analysis

    o What content does it include

- How often are documents gathered/saved?

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VITA

Dr. Alison Alves received her Bachelor of Arts in Elementary and Special Education from Saint Joseph's University, Philadelphia, in May of 2008. She went on to teach English Language Learners (ELL) in Marlborough, MA for one year before teaching special education in Billerica, MA the following year.

In August of 2010, Dr. Alves began her graduate training in School Psychology at Loyola University Chicago. She earned her Masters in Education in the field of Educational Psychology in August, 2011. Throughout her graduate career, Dr. Alves participated in three practicum experiences. The first practicum experience took place in a K-5 suburban elementary school in Des Plaines, IL with a high ELL population (2011-2012 school year) where she engaged in the activities of a school psychologist while under supervision. The second practicum took place in a school-based health clinic in Cicero, IL as a therapist offering counseling to high-school students during the 2012-2013 school year. Dr. Alves completed her third practicum experience serving the role of a school psychologist under supervision in a suburban elementary school with a high ELL population in Des Plaines, IL during the 2013-2014 school year. Dr. Alves completed her APPIC approved doctoral internship during the 2014-2015 school year at a suburban high school with a high ELL population in Park Ridge, IL, completing the activities of a school psychologist under supervision.

While a graduate student in the School Psychology program, Dr. Alves collaborated with Drs. Coffee, Newell, and Sears to determine the effects of reading fluency and math interventions on the reading performance of African-American and Latino school-aged children. She presented the findings of this meta-analysis in 2013 at the School of Education Research Symposium as well as the International School Psychology Association-Annual Conference in Montreal, Quebec in 2012. Dr. Alves also presented research conducted under the direction of Dr. Shriberg investigating the efforts of an under-resourced high school to reduce the dropout rate in 2014 at the National Association of School Psychologist conference in Washington, DC.

Dr. Alves acted as a research assistant performing bilingual (Spanish-English) assessments of children aged 1-8 for a variety of research projects using a variety of psychodiagnostic, developmental, neuropsychological, and academic achievement assessment tools at Shriners Hospital for Children in Chicago, IL from 2013-2014.

Dr. Alves currently acts as a school psychologist in a K-8 suburban school district in Deerfield, IL. As part of that role, she facilitates psychoeducational evaluations, provides counseling services to students, acts as part of the crisis intervention team, and facilitates program groups to a low-incidence program within the district for students with Emotional Disabilities and Autism.