

EXAMINING THE DYNAMICS BETWEEN PARENT PARTICIPATION AND
FIFTH-GRADE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

EXAMINING THE DYNAMICS BETWEEN PARENT PARTICIPATION AND
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The purpose of this study was to examine the dynamics between parent participation in education and student achievement. Fifth-grade parents from seven elementary schools in a large suburban school district in southeast Texas were solicited to complete the PASS and participate in focus groups. A sample of parents who completed the PASS and attended at least one academic community outreach event were individually matched to those parents who did not attend any community outreach events. Standardized test scores for fifth-grade 2018 State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness and sign-in sheets for academic community outreach events were also collected from archived campus and district data. The data were analyzed using Pearson correlations and independent samples t-tests to determine whether a statistically significant relationship exists between parent participation in education and fifth-grade standardized test scores. The solicited parents were also invited to participate in focus groups. Findings indicated that a relationship exists between parent academic assistance at home and student achievement, as well as between parent/school communication and achievement. However, no relationship was found to exist between parent volunteering at school, parent educational decision-making, or parent/community collaboration and

achievement. Results also showed that parent participation in academic community outreach events did influence overall achievement.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

When teachers are asked what is among the most important factors to ensure student success in education, they are likely to respond with the significance of parent participation. Research has shown that parent participation has a positive relationship with student achievement (Araque, Wietstock, Cova, & Zepeda, 2017; Kirby & DiPaola, 2011; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Loughlin-Presnal & Bierman, 2017; Mayo & Siraj, 2015; Sheldon, Epstein, & Galindo, 2010; Smith, 2006; Theodorou, 2008; Van Voorhis, 2011). But what about the more specific aspect of parent participation in academic community outreach events, and its influence on student achievement? The following study examined the dynamics between parent participation and fifth-grade student achievement. This chapter will describe the research problem in the study, the significance of the study, the research purpose and questions, and give definitions of key terms.

Research Problem

According to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which compares student achievement in more than 60 countries, the United States (U.S.) ranks 25th in science literacy, 24th in reading literacy, and 40th in mathematics literacy (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2015). Students in the U.S. today are falling behind the rest of the world in every area of academic achievement. Studies have shown that low ranking in academic achievement makes competition in the global marketplace more difficult for the U.S. (Johnson & Hull, 2014). One of the elements that can be linked to this decline in student achievement is the lack of parent participation in public schools (Mayo & Siraj, 2015).

Teachers have come to understand the value of parent participation on student achievement (Harlow, 2012). Time and time again teachers watch as students strive to be

successful in the classrooms. The students absorb content, access it to make connections, and synthesize products and projects that display their understanding of the content. Teachers analyze the components of this success (or lack thereof) of the students. Many times teachers find that parent participation plays a crucial role in the success of the students. In fact, studies have shown that parent participation is directly connected to student achievement (Araque et al. 2017; Kirby & DiPaola, 2011; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Loughlin-Presnal & Bierman, 2017; Mayo & Siraj, 2015; Sheldon et al., 2010; Smith, 2006; Theodorou, 2008; Van Voorhis, 2011).

There is considerable research in existence today regarding the connection between parent participation and student achievement (Johnson & Hull, 2014; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Mayo & Siraj, 2015; Smith, 2006; Theodorou, 2008). Research in this area has grown tremendously over the past 30 years (Johnson & Hull, 2014). One beneficial way parents can play a part in a child's education is by participating in academic community outreach events. Academic community outreach events, such as family academic nights and the like, are becoming more popular in public schools today. Programs like this bring students and their families into the school and engage them in informal learning activities that get them excited about education and possible future career choices (Yanowitz & Hahs-Vaughn, 2016).

Research shows that parent participation has a direct positive correlation with student achievement (Araque et al. 2017; Kirby & DiPaola, 2011; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Loughlin-Presnal & Bierman, 2017; Mayo & Siraj, 2015; Sheldon et al., 2010; Smith, 2006; Theodorou, 2008; Van Voorhis, 2011). The more parents participate in the education of their child, the greater success that child will have. One form of success students have seen with increased parent participation is an improvement in grades (Araque et al. 2017; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Smith, 2006). Additionally, Mayo and Siraj

(2015) report that students whose families have higher participation rates demonstrate consistent homework practices in contrast to those whose families have lower participation rates. Furthermore, parents who participate in their child's education may observe greater self-confidence and a more positive attitude in their child (Mayo & Siraj, 2015; Smith, 2006). Ultimately it is up to the parents to cooperate with the school to ensure students have the best chance of success (Mayo & Siraj, 2015).

Essentially, the problem is the need to understand the relationship, if any, between parent participation and fifth-grade student achievement. It is also the need to examine the influence of parent participation in academic community outreach events on fifth-grade student achievement. Finally, parent perceptions regarding the effect of parent participation in education and in academic community outreach events on student achievement must be examined.

Understanding the dynamics between parent participation and fifth-grade student achievement is crucial to our education system today. For the U.S. to remain competitive in the global marketplace, attention must be paid in our public schools to the significance of parent participation in education and in academic community outreach events (Mayo & Siraj, 2015). Furthermore, educators must strive to increase parent participation in education through understanding parents' perceptions of their own involvement and its impact on the success of their children (Araque et al., 2017).

Significance of the Study

Parent participation is definitely one of the prime factors for student academic success in all areas (Hill, Witherspoon, & Bartz, 2018). Smith (2006) and Theodorou (2008) agree that parent participation provides awareness on how to build more effective schools that foster family participation. According to these researchers, it is important for all schools to make a concerted effort to understand the culture of all students and the

participation level of their parents. If parents are not involved in their children's education, negative performance can be predicted (Loughlin-Presnal & Bierman, 2017). In the current global economy, it is crucial that U.S. students are adequately prepared to compete in related careers. In order to provide students with the best chances for success in today's market, there is a great need for this study to delve more deeply and more purposefully into the relationship between parent participation and student science achievement (Mayo & Siraj, 2015).

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the dynamics between parent participation and fifth-grade student achievement. The following research questions guided this study:

1. Does a statistically significant relationship exist between parent academic assistance at home and fifth-grade student achievement?
2. Does a statistically significant relationship exist between parent/school communication and fifth-grade student achievement?
3. Does a statistically significant relationship exist between parent volunteering at school and fifth-grade student achievement?
4. Does a statistically significant relationship exist between parent educational decision-making and fifth-grade student achievement?
5. Does a statistically significant relationship exist between parent/community collaboration and fifth-grade student achievement?
6. Does parent participation in academic community outreach events influence fifth-grade student achievement?

7. What are parent perceptions regarding their own various facets of participation in education and its effect on student emotional well-being and student achievement?
8. What are parent perceptions regarding their participation in academic community outreach events and its effect on student emotional well-being and student achievement?

Definitions of Key Terms

Academic community outreach events: Academic community outreach events, such as family academic nights, are family-centered events that bring students and their parents into the school environment to experience science-themed stations (Yanowitz & Hahs-Vaughn, 2016).

Collaborating with the community: Collaborating with the community is a construct of the PASS and is defined as the amount of knowledge parents have about school and community resources that support their child's learning (Ringenberg, Funk, Mullen, Wilford, & Kramer, 2005).

Communicating: Communicating is a construct of the PASS and can be defined as any communication between the home and the school that is relevant to the child's academic success (Ringenberg et al., 2005).

Educational decision-making: Educational decision-making is a construct of the PASS and can be defined as how well parents understand the inner workings of the school and are involved in affecting the school environment, and the emphasis parents put on postsecondary success (Ringenberg et al., 2005).

Learning at home: Learning at home is a construct of the PASS and can be defined as any way in which parents assist with schoolwork at home and encourage student success in the school environment (Ringenberg et al., 2005).

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB): The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 is an act passed by the Congress of the United States of America that gives provisions to students coming from disadvantaged environments (NCLB, 2002).

Parent participation: Parent participation is defined as meaningful two-way communication between family members and school representatives about academics and activities. This communication can be in person, verbal, or written (NCLB, 2002; Johnson & Hull, 2014).

Parenting: Parenting is a construct of the PASS and can be described as the way parents create a home environment that is conducive to learning (Ringenberg et al., 2005).

Parents and School Survey (PASS): This survey was developed in order to quickly and precisely measure a parent's participation in their child's education (Ringenberg et al., 2005).

Socioeconomic status (SES): Socioeconomic status refers to the access a person has to resources, including financial, cultural, social, and human capital (NCES, 2015).

Student achievement: Student achievement can be defined as a measure of growth of knowledge in a specific content area. This growth can be measured through either standardized or nonstandardized measures (Johnson & Hull, 2014).

Volunteering: Volunteering is a construct of the PASS and can be defined as any way in which the parent assists within the school environment, whether in a whole-school context or at the classroom level (Ringenberg et al., 2005).

Conclusion

This chapter laid a framework for the need to examine the relationship between parent participation in education and fifth-grade student achievement. Once the relationship, if any, is determined, it can be used to stress the importance of improving the quality and quantity of parent participation in public schools. With the need to

remain competitive in a global economy, the significance of American students' success in reading, mathematics, and science has become paramount (Johnson & Hull, 2014). Chapter Two will provide a discussion of the literature relevant to the topic, including types of parent participation, differences in participation, types and descriptions of community outreach events and parents' perceptions of them, methods of measuring achievement, and the relationship between parent participation and student achievement.

CHAPTER II:

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Parent participation in public schools, or the lack thereof, is an issue across the country ranging from parents barely showing up to community events to homework remaining undone due to the late work hours parents keep. Parent participation can be defined as the many different ways that parents or family members can be involved in children's education, including parent academic assistance at home, parent/school communication, parent volunteering at school, parent educational decision-making, and parent/community collaboration (Ringenberg et al., 2005).

Information abounds in the research field regarding parent participation in public education and its association to student success (Araque et al., 2017; Fernandez-Alonzo, Alvarez-Diaz, Woitschach, Suarez-Alvarez, & Cuesta, 2017; Johnson & Hull, 2014; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Loughlin-Presnal & Bierman, 2017; Mayo & Siraj, 2015; Smith, 2006; Theodorou, 2008). Furthermore, over the last 30 years there has been a tremendous surge in research on this topic (Johnson & Hull, 2014). This study focused on the relationship between parent participation in education and fifth-grade student achievement, as well as the influence of parent participation in academic community outreach events on fifth-grade student achievement. Therefore, this chapter will examine some of the existing research regarding parent participation in education and its relationship to student achievement. In addition, this chapter will summarize some academic community outreach events and how they have been found to influence student achievement.

Parent Participation in Education

Parent participation in education is an issue heavily discussed among educators, and for good reason. Studies have shown that parent participation does have a positive impact on student achievement (Araque et al., 2017; Kirby & DiPaola, 2011; Lee &

Bowen, 2006; Loughlin-Presnal & Bierman, 2017; Mayo & Siraj, 2015; Sheldon et al., 2010; Smith, 2006; Theodorou, 2008; Van Voorhis, 2011). This section will cover the different types of parent participation. It will also address the differences in parent participation that can be found among the factors of ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and education level.

Types and Styles of Parent Participation

Parent participation as an interaction is accomplished simply when students' families and the local school staff exchange information. However, parent participation can also go much deeper than just communication. A study conducted by Johnson and Hull (2014) set out to determine the relationship between different types of parent participation and achievement in science. A goal of this study was to establish which parent behaviors had the most positive effect on student growth in science. This study drew archived data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study–Kindergarten (ECLS-K), which measured student achievement at kindergarten and grades one, three, five, and eight. The sample was designed with a three-stage probability method in order to be representative of the national population of kindergarteners. Each school involved was coded as either public or private, and by size. The parents of students involved were coded by race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status (SES), and level of education.

In the study by Johnson and Hull (2014), surveys of types of parent participation were completed about parents of the students in the sample. The factors addressed were attendance at open house, parent-teacher association meetings, school events, participation in volunteering and fundraising, communication with the school, educational expectations, and attendance at parent-teacher conferences. The results of these surveys along with the ECLS-K results were analyzed using cross-classified multilevel latent growth curve modeling. Ultimately, the findings of this study indicated

that there was no connection between parent participation at school events, parent-teacher communication, or volunteering and student achievement.

The qualitative study conducted by Smith (2006) was intended to explore types and levels of parent participation in low-income families by conducting a case study at a new school in a low-income neighborhood. Semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted with a snowball sample of teachers, social workers, and parents of students who would be attending this new school. The interviews ranged from 15 to 50 minutes. Events were also observed at the school, including academic community outreach events and before- and after-school programs. Analysis of the information gathered began right at the beginning in the form of reading and rereading the interview transcripts and observation notes. Findings were coded and placed in a matrix for further examination. Participants indicated that with daily life so complicated, they felt too consumed to spend time participating in their child's education. But regardless of life's struggles, the majority of parents shared that they stressed the importance of education to their children.

Additionally, Mayo and Siraj (2015) completed a mixed-methods study that attempted to understand how and why families from a lower SES were able to actively cultivate their children as successful learners. The study used archived data from case studies that were completed as a part of the Effective Provision of Pre-School, Primary and Secondary Education (EPPSE). The study combined quantitative data from EPPSE and qualitative in-depth interview data collected over two years' time. The sample consisted of two groups of 20 and 15 families from the EPPSE study. The first group had been found to have progressed above expectations and the second group had been found to have progressed at or below expectations. The ethnicities and genders of the groups were representative of the population. Each interview was transcribed and coded such that responses had a positive or negative effect on the students' progress.

Johnson and Hull (2014) and Smith (2006) found three different dimensions of parent participation. Home-based is the first type of participation. Home-based participation refers to activities or discussions held between parents and their children in the home, such as homework help. Many studies have found that homework help and discussions about school greatly influence students' perceptions about school toward the positive (Mayo & Siraj, 2015; Theodorou, 2008). Home-based participation might also include the provision of a computer or some other type of technology in the home (Mayo & Siraj, 2015). Another type of participation mentioned by Johnson and Hull (2014) is school-based. School-based participation includes activities like parent-teacher conferences, volunteers, and school programs. Mayo and Siraj (2015) found that many parents feel that by attending these events at the school they are demonstrating a high level of commitment to their children's school endeavors, and are thus helping their children to learn. The third dimension of parent participation is the importance they place on the future of their children. Parents must emphasize to their children the necessity of higher education and potential employment aspirations (Johnson & Hull, 2014). Schools and district leadership must make it a priority to create multiple opportunities for parents to participate in the education of their children (Smith, 2006).

When discussing homework practices, Van Voorhis (2011) wanted to know if the Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) program had an influence on family involvement and student achievement in mathematics. The TIPS program focuses on the content and rationale of homework, purposefully involving parents in the learning process. Students are given a longer period of time to complete the homework, and prompts are given for conversation between the family member and the student. The test sample consisted of 153 students and their families from four southeastern urban elementary schools who participated in the TIPS program for two years, while the control

group used established curricula for homework and homework practices. Descriptive statistics and independent samples t-tests were used to determine whether participation in the program had an influence on student achievement in mathematics. Findings from the study were that those involved in the TIPS program had a significantly higher rate of homework completion as well as higher standardized test scores.

Regarding styles of participation, Fernandez-Alonso et al. (2017) wanted to explore the relationship between parent educational participation style and student achievement. The researchers defined one of the types of participation as controlling and the other type as more indirect support. Participant students were gathered through systematic random sampling from 933 secondary schools. They were asked to complete a questionnaire about each of their parents, generally mother and father. The questions related to variables regarding the level of control and communication the parent(s) had over their child's schooling. The same students were given a battery of tests over language, mathematics, science, and citizenship. Pearson correlations were used to determine what relationship existed, if any, between participation type and student achievement. Findings of the study were that the way parents participate in education does have a relationship on student achievement. In fact, in this case the less controlling, less communicative parents tended to have students with higher achievement.

Participation Differences

There are differences in the amount and type of parent participation when it comes to ethnicity, socioeconomic status (SES), and level of parent education. Lee and Bowen (2006) completed a correlational and descriptive study which was to determine if parental involvement had an impact on children's academic achievement. More specifically, the study focused on the differences between ethnicity, poverty level, and parent education level where parental involvement and student achievement are

concerned. The study was conducted in the southeastern U.S. in a public school district. The sample was 415 third- through fifth-graders who completed the Elementary School Success Profile (ESSP), created by the University of North Carolina. In addition, parental level of involvement was assessed by parent survey and teacher report.

The sample for this study by Lee and Bowen (2006) was selected randomly. From all the elementary schools in the district involved, 700 students were selected. Seventy more Hispanic students were added by oversampling to make the demographics of the sample match the population. Information packets were sent home to those families and the ones that were returned became the sample. Information on parent participation and the results of the ESSP were compiled to analyze. The data were analyzed using t-tests, chi-square statistics, and stepwise hierarchical regressions.

Lee and Bowen (2006) found that ethnicity did indeed play a factor in the level of parent participation. They found that European American parents were more involved at their children's school whereas Hispanic and African American parents were more likely to focus their attention on at-home participation. The researchers used the school lunch program to measure SES with regard to parent participation. They reported that families on the school lunch program confessed to spending less time in communication with their child's school and in discussion with their child regarding educational aspirations. This high level of expectations contributed significantly to student achievement. However, those families did convey that they spent quite a bit of time limiting their child's time playing and watching television in order to complete homework assignments and to spend time reading. This attention paid to the home environment contributed to significantly higher performance. Furthermore, parents who had earned at least a two-year degree in an institution of higher learning were found to have a significantly higher level of involvement at their child's school.

Regarding SES, Smith (2006) reports that parent participation in families with lower financial levels were not able to match the degree of participation seen in families with higher incomes. Some parents are seen as uninvolved, when in truth all they are trying to do is bring critical income to the household toward survival. However, having a school created with the needs of low-income families in mind put forth an opportunity for those low-income parents to participate in the education of their child in other ways. The school in this study became more of a local resource center which began meeting some of the needs of the local families. With regard to the influence parent participation had on student achievement, findings indicated that parent involvement at the school and parent educational expectations for their children had a direct effect on student achievement.

The study completed by Theodorou (2008) explored teacher perceptions and preconceived notions of participation of immigrant parents in the education of their students. This study sought to uncover ideas not just about parent participation in general, but more specifically parent participation in underserved groups. The researcher in this study conducted full six-hour day observations at an elementary school, including after-school events. Ten immigrant families were selected by purposeful sampling, and visits were made to each of their homes. Formal interviews were conducted with each of the families including the parents and the children. Furthermore, each of the full-time teachers and administrators at the school were involved in semi-structured interviews. Analysis of the results was done using qualitative software and selective coding.

The findings in the study by Theodorou (2008) showed that teachers did have a preconceived negative perception about the immigrant families. They saw the parents in these families as disconnected from the education of their children, when in fact there were many factors at play. Some of these factors were language barriers, financial struggles, and low parental level of education. Concerning parent level of education,

Theodorou (2008) found that a low education level in parents created a sense of fear and inferiority when it came to dealings with the school. In fact, these parents seemed to see the school as a completely separate sphere of existence in which the teacher, not the parent, was expected to raise the child.

Furthermore, in a study by Hill et al. (2018), focus groups were formed of parents, students, guidance counselors, and teachers with the intention of better understanding the concept of parent participation by collecting qualitative data. Topics covered in the focus groups were broad, but all covered aspects of parental involvement at home and school, plus other aspects. Goals for students were discussed from the perspective of every participant. Findings from the focus groups included many themes that suggested how participation differs across groups and ethnicities. For one, Hill et al. (2018) found that most parents wanted to see their children succeed in school, but the most urgency was found to exist within ethnic minority parents. Hispanic parents, in particular, were adamant about their children taking their education seriously. However, those parents also felt isolated from the school system. African American parents were clear that they wanted their children to overcome any obstacles in front of them and be successful. Parents of European descent were found to be more concerned with their children being happy and fulfilled than they were with achievement.

Additionally, when discussing whether socioeconomic differences have an impact on the relationship between parent participation and student achievement, Kirby and DiPaola (2011) conducted a study that sought to examine how, even in an urban, low socioeconomic setting, a positive relationship can be found between parent and community engagement with the school and student achievement. One school district in Virginia was the setting for this study and 35 urban elementary schools made up the sample. Community engagement was measured using the Community Engagement

Subscale from the School Climate Index and compared with student achievement from the Virginia Standards of Learning Exams using bivariate correlations. Findings from the study indicated that despite the low socioeconomic status of the sample, when parents and community are engaged, students are more likely to succeed at higher levels.

Academic Community Outreach Events

Academic community outreach events are becoming increasingly popular in recent years (Harlow, 2012; Kirby & DiPaola, 2011; Yanowitz & Hahs-Vaughn, 2016). With the rising importance of postsecondary education and careers to the global economy, the necessity of bringing parents in to participate in academic activities with their children is clear. Especially in homes that speak a language other than English, it is critical to student success for parents to have access to culturally relevant academic outreach events at their local school (Valadez & Moineau, 2010). This section will cover different examples of academic community outreach events that can be seen in education today.

Examples of Outreach Events and Their Effects

Valadez and Moineau (2010) conducted a study over a five-year time span which examined how future teachers, as a part of their studies, were taught to develop a family science night for English as a Second Language (ESL) learners and their families. This assignment helped to convey to them the importance of parent participation in students' education. The ESL family science night was an event in which parents came to the school with their children, shared in a meal, and participated in science experiments using objects that could be found in their own homes. The parents were given the opportunity to experience science content in both their native language and in English. Child care was provided for the families and door prizes were given away.

The data collected by Valadez and Moineau (2010) were collected from three sources over the five years from five different bilingual elementary schools at which the family science nights were held. The first data source was the attendance of the family nights. Secondly, teacher evaluations of the family science nights were reviewed to check for attitudes about the events. Finally, preservice teachers' reflections were examined through an open-ended questionnaire in order to reveal any teaching practice implications and changes in student success in their classrooms. The responses to the reflections were coded for recurring themes, and those themes emerged as significant findings. The researchers found that collaboration in planning and executing community outreach events such as the ESL family science nights is essential to success. Another theme that emerged as significant was the importance of working closely with the Hispanic community in order to achieve student success due to the critical nature of parent participation in the education of children.

In addition, Harlow (2012) described another family science night in which two classes of preservice teachers facilitated stations at the family science night for two elementary schools. The study was conducted in order to determine what benefit these preservice teachers would gain from participating in this event. Harlow's (2012) sample included 46 students from a graduate-level teaching program in California. Both of the schools hosting the family science nights were mostly Hispanic in ethnicity and contained a high percentage of low-SES students. In the events at both schools, the preservice teachers were required to plan and facilitate a science content station. Examples of these stations were volcanoes, erosion, earthquakes, and phases of the moon. The teachers were able to have small group conversations with the students and parents were able to get firsthand experience of the students' and parents' excitement about science.

The data collected by Harlow (2012) were qualitative in nature and included before-and-after thoughts about the family science night the preservice teachers planned and facilitated. The participants were required to submit their experiences regarding the evening on the course website available to all students. Furthermore, they were expected to turn in another reflection only to the instructor of the course. Another form of data submitted were student artifacts completed at the outreach event. The data collected were coded by unbiased researchers. Findings suggest that the preservice teachers thoroughly enjoyed planning and participating in the family science night. Furthermore, they did so to their own surprise. The participants found that the value of engaging students in science through a community outreach event helped them to truly understand how students take in, process, and retain content, thus increasing their self-efficacy in teaching science.

Moreover, a qualitative study was completed in the Pacific Northwest by Bottoms, Ciechanowski, Jones, de la Hoz, and Fonseca (2017) regarding teacher candidates' participation in family math and science nights. The researchers sought to discover what the preservice teachers learned about teaching and learning from being a part of these events, as well as how their experiences would shape their teaching practices. Participants were asked to answer questions in a reflection after each family math and science night during the same week. Reflections were read and coded inductively and deductively in order to establish themes based on challenging attitudes about teaching and learning, using culture and difference to bring people together, and improving pedagogy. A particular subtheme emerged that applies to the current study in particular. That idea is that these types of events challenge the declining view of children and families held by teachers. It was found that during family math and science nights, preservice teachers found themselves enjoying the interactions between students and their

parents. Participants expressed the value they found in using culture to the advantage of student learning by participating in family math and science nights. As a result, participants saw improvement in their students' overall performance in science and math.

Furthermore, academic community outreach events can be utilized to provide adult and family education in addition to training for school faculty on how to involve culturally diverse families. In a study by O'Donnell and Kirkner (2014), 144 parents/guardians of 208 elementary children from low socioeconomic, predominantly Spanish-speaking households were selected to participate in a family involvement program. The researchers wanted to determine if participation in the program would have an effect on the level of educational participation of the caregivers, as well as on student achievement and work habits. Not only did the program provide adult and family education but it also provided monthly socials for school staff and parents to get to know each other. Participants took a pre- and postsurvey about self-perceived involvement in their child's education. District archived data were also collected on students' report card grades, demographics, standardized test scores, and work habits. Paired t-tests were used to compare parents' level of involvement before and after the program, and linear regression was used to determine the impact of the program and parent involvement on student performance. Findings indicate that, as a result of participation in this outreach event, parents reported higher levels of involvement in all levels, but especially in the area of parent-teacher communication and activities at school. Additionally, greater parent participation predicted more student effort in work habits and higher achievement on English language arts standardized tests. However, participation did not predict higher achievement on mathematics standardized tests. As a result of the program in this study, parents began to take more interest in taking roles in the school and community.

It has been shown by the previous research that academic community outreach events can be varied in design. They can contain a wide variety of activities that encompass learning objectives from many grade levels. Furthermore, it has been shown that teachers and parents can learn much about the interests and knowledge of the students by participating in these programs (Bottoms et al., 2017; Harlow, 2012; Valadez & Moineau, 2010).

Parents' and Students' Perceptions of Programs

Yanowitz and Hahs-Vaughn (2016) found that family science nights were wide in variety and occurred all across the southern U.S. in middle schools and high schools. They conducted a study which examined the reactions of parents and students after engaging in a family science night. The sample for the study included 15 teachers at 14 schools ranging from sixth to twelfth grades. Each of the teachers conducted family science nights as a part of the requirements of a summer teacher institute. A survey was given to each of the attendees at the close of each event. Those who returned the survey completed were included in the data set. The participant sample was 164 parents and 159 students who returned surveys after participating in one of these events. The survey used was generated by Yanowitz and Hahs-Vaughn (2016), and employed a five-point Likert scale to rate participants' attitudes regarding and encounters during the family science night. The survey also included some open-ended response items asking adults to discuss what they had learned about their child's interests in science, and asking students to describe their science curiosities.

The data analysis in the study by Yanowitz and Hahs-Vaughn (2016) was accomplished by coding the Likert responses and discussing decisions on coding between the researchers. Open-responses were read and reread by multiple researchers to determine dominant themes. The findings of the study indicated that both students and

parents who attended the outreach events had a positive experience and would be interested in participating again in the future. However, perhaps a more significant finding in the study is the interest the parents in attendance took in their own child's science interests and how to foster them (Yanowitz & Hahs-Vaughn, 2016)

Participants in the above-described academic community outreach events had various reactions to the events, with most reactions being positive. Under the direction of the facilitators of these events, students were encouraged to engage in deep thinking, an activity that fosters a change in perception regarding education and even possible a change in plans for future endeavors (Harlow, 2012). In the days leading up to and following the academic community outreach events, some teachers even saw general improvement in students' attitudes and work habits in the classroom. The majority of adults participating in these academic community outreach events indicated they enjoyed the experience, found it valuable, and that they were even able to learn something new (Bottoms et al., 2017; Valadez & Moineau, 2010; Yanowitz & Hahs-Vaughn, 2016). Many parents even reported learning something new about their own child's abilities and interests (Yanowitz & Hahs-Vaughn, 2016).

Influence of Parent Participation on Student Achievement

Research has shown that parent participation has a positive impact on student achievement (Araque, Wietstock, Cova, & Zepeda, 2017; Kirby & DiPaola, 2011; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Loughlin-Presnal & Bierman, 2017; Mayo & Siraj, 2015; Sheldon, Epstein, & Galindo, 2010; Smith, 2006; Theodorou, 2008; Van Voorhis, 2011). The findings in these studies show that the more participation parents give to the education of their child, the better the chances of that student's success. One type of success studies have seen with more participatory parents is an improvement in student grades (Araque et al., 2017; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Smith, 2006). Additionally, Mayo and Siraj (2015) have

reported that better homework practices are reported in students with higher parent participation in contrast to those with lower parent participation. Furthermore, parents who participate in their child's education may witness their child having higher self-confidence and a more positive attitude (Mayo & Siraj, 2015; Smith, 2006). Ultimately, suggests Mayo & Siraj (2015), a good part of the child's success rests on the parents and their responsibility to be a present part of the education of their child.

Furthermore, Loughlin-Presnal and Bierman (2017) wanted to find out if there were associations between parent educational decision-making and student academic outcomes. They conducted a study in which 356 children and their guardians from low-SES families were participants. The guardians were interviewed in their homes each year when their children were in grade one, two, three, and five with the goal of determining the academic expectations they had for their children. The goals of these interviews were to determine both the grades they expected their children to attain and the lengths they believed their children would pursue during their educational careers. Additionally, the students were given assessments each year to determine their progression in reading achievement and their self-perceived academic proficiency. Data were analyzed over grades one, two, three, and five using the chi-square test of significance. Findings of this study were that while parental expectations in first grade did not predict fifth-grade achievement, parental academic expectations in other related grade levels were significantly related to achievement. Loughlin-Presnal and Bierman (2017) found that high parental academic expectations in first grade significantly contributed to student achievement in second grade. Furthermore, third-grade parental expectations significantly predicted fifth-grade student achievement.

When speaking of mathematics achievement across the country, Sheldon et al. (2010) surveyed 39 elementary, middle, and high schools from multiple states regarding

their mathematics family participation activities. The survey asked the participant schools to report which activities from a list of programs and practices they had implemented during the school year, as well as parents' levels of participation in those practices. These practices ranged from homework participation, to parent-teacher conferences, to family math nights. In fact, 27 out of the 39 participant sites reported holding a family math night in an effort to bolster their student mathematics scores on standardized tests. Participant schools also reported the percentage of students who met standard on that particular state's standardized mathematics test. Descriptive statistics and regression analysis were used to determine the impact the level of parent participation had on student achievement. Findings from this study suggested that the higher the level of parent participation in education, the higher their children's mathematics achievement.

Conversely, Araque et al. (2017) completed a study that explored the influence of a parent participation initiative on parent knowledge, parent participation, and student achievement. The researchers used availability sampling in two elementary schools and two intermediate schools in California to recruit a group of 68 parents. These parents were put through the Ten Education Commandments for Parents program, a guide containing 10 messages to guide them in their parenting skills. Preceding and following this initiative, parents were given a skills survey to test their knowledge and skills. They were also asked to share their experiences before, during, and after the program. Additionally, student grade-point averages were monitored over the course of two years. Findings from this study indicated that, when compared with the control group, parents who attended the program did have an increase in participation in their child's education, including behaviors such as homework practices, communication with the school/teacher, and developing future educational interests with their child. However, while both the test

and control groups showed increases in mathematics, language arts, and science grades, the elementary students in the experimental group did not have significant academic difference in growth when compared with the control group.

Summary of Findings

Parents' participation at home and at school is essential for students' success in education (Araque et al., 2017; Kirby & DiPaola, 2011; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Loughlin-Presnal & Bierman, 2017; Mayo & Siraj, 2015; Sheldon et al., 2010; Smith, 2006; Theodorou, 2008; Van Voorhis, 2011). With the many different types of parent participation – homework help, parent-teacher conferences, attendance at school functions, etc. – families of students have plenty of opportunity to participate in the education of the student (Johnson & Hull, 2014; Mayo & Siraj, 2015). However, there are obstacles to parent participation in education, such as socioeconomic status, parent level of education, and language barriers (Lee & Bowen, 2006; Smith, 2006; Theodorou, 2008). According to the literature reviewed above, one way for parents to participate in the education of their children is to attend academic community outreach events like family academic night. It is essential to bring these events to schools in order to compel more parents to participate, thus increasing the possibility of a boost in student achievement (Bottoms et al., 2017; Harlow, 2012; Kirby & DiPaola, 2011; O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014; Valadez & Moineau, 2010; Yanowitz & Hahs-Vaughn, 2016).

Theoretical Framework

The framework for this study is grounded in the parental involvement model of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995). This model consists of five levels, the primary being the reasoning behind the parents' decision to participate in the education of their child (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). According to these authors, the decision to become involved is based on the parents' view of themselves as a parent, their self-

efficacy for helping their children be successful in their educational endeavors, and the demand received from the school and child to participate. Once the parent has made the decision to participate, the second level of the model consists of the parents' choice of his/her form of participation, whether it be participation at home, community interaction, volunteering at school, communication with the school, or some other form. The reasons for these choices depend on the parents' abilities and knowledge in various areas, available time constraints, and invitations and demands from the student and school (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995).

The third level of the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) model of parental involvement follows a parents' decision to participate in the education of their child and the method by which to do so. It consists of the tools through which parents might help students succeed in education through their participation. These tools include modeling how to be successful in education, positive reinforcement, and giving clear instructions. The fourth level of the model consists of mediating variables. These are the interactions between the parents' decision to participate, the type of participation chosen, the tools parents use, and the fit all these strategies have within the school's actions. According to this model, parents' and schools' endeavors must align in order for the model to work.

Finally, the fifth level of the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) model of parental involvement is the level that rings most truly with this study. The fifth level is that of student outcomes. According to these authors, parents who work through each level of this model of parent involvement, with the dedicated help of the school, will experience a child who owns an individual sense of self-efficacy for academic success. In fact, according to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997), parents' success as participants in their children's education goes hand-in-hand with the academic success of students.

Conclusion

The literature reviewed above provides a framework for the ideas involved in this study regarding the connection between parent participation, including participation in academic community outreach events, and fifth-grade student achievement. The following chapter will describe the methodology to be used by the researcher during the current study. This chapter will include an overview of the research problem, research purpose and questions, research design, population and sample, instrumentation, data collection procedures, data analysis, privacy and ethics considerations, and limitations for this study.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine the dynamics between parent participation and fifth-grade student achievement. Fifth-grade parents from seven elementary schools in a large suburban school district in southeast Texas were solicited to complete the *Parent and School Survey* (PASS) (Ringenberg et al., 2005) and participate in focus groups. A sample of parents who completed the PASS and attended at least one academic community outreach event were individually matched to those parents who did not attend any community outreach events. For the quantitative phase, archived data consisting of sign-in sheets for academic community outreach events and state standardized test scores were obtained from district data. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson product-moment correlations, and independent samples t-tests. Responses from the focus groups were analyzed using an inductive thematic coding process. This chapter presents an overview of the research problem, operational definitions of the theoretical constructs, the purpose of the research and the corresponding research questions, the research design, the population and sampling of the participants, instrumentation, how the data were collected and analyzed, ethical considerations, and the limitations of the study.

Overview of the Research Problem

Students in the U.S. recently ranked 20th in science among tested countries of the world (NCES, 2012). This puts the U.S. at risk of falling behind the competition in the global marketplace. A possible cause of these low scores is the lack of parent participation in public education (Mayo & Siraj, 2015). As a matter of fact, studies have increasingly shown that parent participation is positively correlated to student achievement (Araque, Wietstock, Cova, & Zepeda, 2017; Kirby & DiPaola, 2011; Lee &

Bowen, 2006; Loughlin-Presnal & Bierman, 2017; Mayo & Siraj, 2015; Sheldon, Epstein, & Galindo, 2010; Smith, 2006; Theodorou, 2008; Van Voorhis, 2011). Events like family science nights are a way to increase parent participation in education. These programs bring students into the school environment and allow parents and students to collaborate on activities surrounding science content (Yanowitz & Hahs-Vaughn, 2016). Being aware of the relationship between parent participation and student success in science is vital to the success of the U.S., especially with the expansion of necessary careers in STEM fields (Mayo & Siraj, 2015).

Operationalization of Theoretical Constructs

The study consists of eight constructs: (a) student achievement, (b) parent participation, (c) parent academic assistance at home, (d) parent/school communication, (e) parent volunteering at school, (f) parent educational decision-making, (g) parent/community collaboration, and (h) academic community outreach events. Student achievement is defined as a measure of growth of knowledge in a specific content area (Johnson & Hull, 2014). Student achievement will be measured using scores from the fifth-grade *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness* (STAAR). Parent participation is defined as meaningful two-way communication between family members and school representatives about academics and activities (Johnson & Hull, 2014; NCLB, 2002). Parent academic assistance at home is defined as creating a home environment and assistance that directly supports a child's learning. Parent/school communication is defined as contact between the parents and the school specifically referring to the student's academic progress. Parent volunteering at school is defined as parents participating in schoolwide/classroom activities, either during or after school hours. Parent educational decision-making is defined as the amount of time parents spend

participating in shaping the environment of the school and how much emphasis parents put on postsecondary success.

Parent/community collaboration is defined as how well parents are aware of and make use of community resources (Ringenberg et al., 2005). Parent academic assistance at home, parent/school communication, parent volunteering at school, parent educational decision-making, and parent/community collaboration will be measured using the PASS. Academic community outreach events, such as family science nights, are defined as events that bring students and their parents into the school environment to experience engaging activities (Yanowitz & Hahs-Vaughn, 2016). Participation in academic community outreach events will be measured using archived sign-in sheets and responses from focus groups.

Research Purpose, Questions, and Hypotheses

The purpose of this study was to examine the dynamics between parent participation and fifth-grade student achievement. The following research questions guided this study:

1. Does a statistically significant relationship exist between parent academic assistance at home and fifth-grade student achievement?

H₀: A statistically significant relationship does not exist between parent academic assistance at home and fifth-grade student achievement.

H_a: A statistically significant relationship does exist between parent academic assistance at home and fifth-grade student achievement.

2. Does a statistically significant relationship exist between parent/school communication and fifth-grade student achievement?

H₀: A statistically significant relationship does not exist between

parent/school communication and fifth-grade student achievement.

H_a: A statistically significant relationship does exist between parent/school communication and fifth-grade student achievement.

3. Does a statistically significant relationship exist between parent volunteering at school and fifth-grade student achievement?

H₀: A statistically significant relationship does not exist between parent volunteering at school and fifth-grade student achievement.

H_a: A statistically significant relationship does exist between parent volunteering at school and fifth-grade student achievement.

4. Does a statistically significant relationship exist between parent educational decision-making and fifth-grade student achievement?

H₀: A statistically significant relationship does not exist between parent educational decision-making and fifth-grade student achievement.

H_a: A statistically significant relationship does exist between parent educational decision-making and fifth-grade student achievement.

5. Does a statistically significant relationship exist between parent/community collaboration and fifth-grade student achievement?

H₀: A statistically significant relationship does not exist between parent/community collaboration and fifth-grade student achievement.

H_a: A statistically significant relationship does exist between parent/community collaboration and fifth-grade student achievement.

6. Does parent participation in academic community outreach events influence

fifth-grade student achievement?

H₀: Parent participation in academic community outreach events does not influence fifth-grade student achievement.

H_a: Parent participation in academic community outreach events does influence fifth-grade student achievement.

7. What are parent perceptions regarding their own various facets of participation in education and its effect on student emotional well-being and student achievement?
8. What are parent perceptions regarding their participation in academic community outreach events and its effect on student emotional well-being and student achievement?

Research Design

For this study, a mixed-methods approach (QUAN→qual) was used to examine the relationship between parent participation and fifth-grade achievement, to discover the influence of parent participation in academic community outreach events on fifth-grade student achievement, and to analyze parent perceptions regarding the influence of academic community outreach events on student achievement. The design consisted of a quantitative and a qualitative phase. The advantage of implementing this design is that it allows for a more thorough and in-depth exploration of the quantitative results by following up with a qualitative phase. Fifth-grade parents from seven elementary schools in a large suburban school district in southeast Texas were solicited to complete the PASS and participate in focus groups. A sample of parents who completed the PASS and attended at least one academic community outreach event were individually matched to

those parents who did not attend any community outreach events. For the quantitative phase, archived data consisting of sign-in sheets for academic community outreach events and state standardized test scores were obtained from district data. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson product-moment correlations, and independent samples t-tests. Responses from the focus groups were analyzed using an inductive thematic coding process.

Population and Sample

The population of the study was a large suburban school district in southeast Texas. The participating school district serves over 9,000 students and has 12 schools (seven elementary schools, two junior high schools, one high school, one alternative school, and an early childhood center). Table 3.1 displays the student demographics of the participating school district and seven elementary campuses and shows the race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status of students for the 2017-2018 school year (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2018a). Of the district population, 51.9% were male and 48.1% female. Of the population, 11.3% were African American, 78.4% were Hispanic, 7.4% were White, 1.3% were American Indian, 1.0% were Asian, 0.1% were Pacific Islander, and 0.6% were two or more races. Of the total, 31.9% were English Learners and 59.4% were considered at-risk.

Table 3.1

Student Demographics at District and Seven Elementary Schools

	District	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Male	51.9	52.6	49.2	49.0	54.1	52.5	53.2	51.8
Female	48.1	47.4	50.8	51.0	45.9	47.5	46.8	48.2
African American	11.3	14.3	9.8	0.8	2.4	23.5	3.1	5.8
Hispanic	78.4	73.5	78.1	87.5	84.6	69.7	88.1	77.6
White	7.4	7.8	8.3	9.0	8.9	4.2	6.1	7.4
American Indian	1.3	1.3	2.4	1.9	2.8	1.4	1.5	1.3
Asian	1.0	2.2	0.9	0.3	0.5	0.3	1.0	1.8
Pacific Islander	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1
Two or more races	0.6	0.7	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.8	0.6	0.6
English Learner	31.9	32.2	38.9	51.3	57.0	28.7	45.4	43.2
At-Risk	59.4	59.0	64.3	80.5	80.2	57.8	63.3	62.9

The participating school district had 765 fifth-graders enrolled during the 2017-2018 school year. Each of the schools in the study serves kindergarten through fifth grade. The leadership of the campuses consists of one principal and one assistant principal. Fifth-grade parents from seven elementary schools in a large suburban school district in southeast Texas were solicited to complete the PASS and participate in focus groups. A sample of parents who completed the PASS and attended at least one academic community outreach event were individually matched to those parents who did

not attend any community outreach events. The sample was matched based on gender, race, ethnicity, English Learner, and At-risk status.

Participant Selection

Parents of fifth-graders who attend the elementary schools in the participating district were sent a cover letter soliciting their participation in the study along with the PASS. The PASS collected participation data from a sample of the parents of fifth-grade students. Those who completed the survey were invited to participate in focus groups in which the participants answered perception questions about parent participation and academic community outreach events. Sign-in sheets from all academic community outreach events for the seven elementary campuses were collected. Those fifth-grade parents who attended an academic community outreach event were invited to participate in the focus groups as well. Furthermore, invitations to focus groups in English and Spanish were sent out *en masse* to all parents of fifth-grade students. Effort was taken to gather a sample that is demographically representative of the entire population.

Instrumentation

State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

The *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness* (STAAR) test was installed as the primary assessment for Texas public school students in 2012 in order to ensure that Texas students are academically competitive nationally and globally. Tests are given over reading and mathematics in grades three through eight, with writing being assessed only in grades four and seven, science in grades five and eight, and social studies in grade eight only. Every question in the STAAR assessments is aligned to the current learning standards used by the state, the *Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills* (TEKS) (TEA, 2016a). For the purposes of this study, fifth-grade STAAR data from 2018 were collected in reading, mathematics, and science.

Achievement of STAAR fifth-grade mathematics was measured by the following reporting categories: (a) numerical representations and relationships (6 items), (b) computations and algebraic relationships (17 items), (b) geometry and measurement (9 items), and (d) data analysis and personal financial literacy (4 items), for a total of 36 items, three of which were griddable (TEA, 2016c). Reviewers proved the validity of fifth-grade mathematics STAAR by finding that 98.5% of the items are fully aligned to the TEKS. Kolen, Zang, and Hanson (KZH) procedures were used to compute internal reliability of the fifth-grade mathematics STAAR at 0.883 (TEA, 2016b).

Achievement of STAAR fifth-grade reading was measured by the following reporting categories: (a) understanding/analysis across genres (8 items), (b) understanding/analysis of literary texts (16 items), and (c) understanding/analysis of informational texts (14 items), for a total of 38 items (TEA, 2016d). Reviewers proved the validity of fifth-grade reading STAAR by finding that 88.6% of the items are fully aligned to the TEKS. KZH procedures were used to compute internal reliability of the fifth-grade reading STAAR at 0.908 (TEA, 2016b).

Achievement of STAAR fifth-grade science was measured by the following reporting categories: (a) matter and energy (6 items), (b) force, motion, and energy (8 items), (c) earth and space (10 items), and (d) organisms and environments (12 items), for a total of 36 items (TEA, 2016e). Reviewers proved the validity of fifth-grade science STAAR by finding that 98.3% of items are fully aligned to the TEKS. KZH procedures were used to compute internal reliability of the fifth-grade science STAAR at 0.883 (TEA, 2016b).

Parent and School Survey (PASS)

The *Parent and School Survey* (PASS) was developed in order to quickly and precisely measure a parent's participation in their child's education. The PASS is based

on Epstein's parental involvement framework of six constructs and was developed by Ringenberg, Funk, Mullen, Wilford, and Kramer (2005). The six constructs, each containing four items, are as follows: (a) parenting, (b) communicating, (c) volunteering, (d) learning at home, (e) decision-making, and (f) collaborating with community. The survey consists of 24 Likert-scale items measuring 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Partially Agree/Partially Disagree, 4 = Disagree, and 5 = Strongly Disagree. In addition, there are six items which measure the issues that make parent participation most troublesome – lack of time, time of programs, small children, transportation, work schedule, and other issues (see Appendix A). Cronbach's alpha for the PASS was computed at 0.771. For the purposes of this study subscales (a) and (d) were collapsed and relabeled as "parent academic assistance at home."

Data Collection Procedures

Quantitative

The researcher obtained permission to conduct the study from the University of Houston-Clear Lake (UHCL) Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) and the participating school district's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before collecting data. After permission was gathered, the researcher solicited the names, email addresses, and phone numbers of all parents of 2017-2018 fifth-grade students within the participating school district. Parents of 2017-2018 fifth-grade students in the participating district received a survey cover letter along with the PASS requesting their involvement in the study. In addition to the PASS, they also received a timeline for completing the survey and instructions regarding the data collection process. Collection points were set up at each campus to receive completed surveys.

Qualitative

The parents who returned the complete survey and agreed to participate in the study were contacted via email or telephone and invited to participate in focus groups. Further participants were sought by sending out information requests to all fifth-grade parents. Any forms returned were sorted according to those who participated in the original survey and those who did not. The reason for this method is to get perspectives from multiple facets. In the focus groups, parents shared their perceptions about participation in the education of their child and in academic community outreach events and its effectiveness in increasing student achievement. Specifically, the participants of each focus group had the opportunity to discuss the academic community outreach events they attended during the school year and the benefits those events held for their children. Furthermore, they had the opportunity to discuss the direct effect they believe the events had on the students' achievement on high-stakes test scores.

The dates for the focus groups were chosen with each focus group lasting no more than an hour, and consisting of no more than eight participants. One of the focus groups was held in Spanish with the assistance of a translator, and the other one was conducted in English. The participant responses were audio-recorded, transcribed, and translated if needed. The data collected is stored on a computer hard drive and on a flash drive. Both the hard drive and the flash drive are password protected. The computer is kept in a locked office. The flash drive is stored in a safe for five years, after which time the data will be destroyed.

Data Analysis

Quantitative

Following data collection, the data were downloaded from Microsoft Excel into an IBM SPSS statistics spreadsheet for further analysis. In order to answer the research

questions one through five, data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, and Pearson product-moment correlations to identify relationships between parent participation and student achievement.

For research question one, the data were further examined using a Pearson product-moment correlation to find out if a statistically significant relationship exists between parent academic assistance at home and fifth-grade student achievement. For research question two, the data were further examined using a Pearson product-moment correlation to find out if a statistically significant relationship existed between parent/school communication and fifth-grade student achievement. For research question three, the data were further examined using a Pearson product-moment correlation to find out if a statistically significant relationship exists between parent volunteering and fifth-grade student achievement. Parent academic assistance at home, parent/school communication, parent volunteering, and fifth-grade student achievement are continuous variables.

For research question four, the data were further examined using a Pearson product-moment correlation to find out if a statistically significant relationship exists between parent educational decision-making and fifth-grade student achievement. For research question five, the data were further examined using a Pearson product-moment correlation to find out if a statistically significant relationship exists between parent/community collaboration and fifth-grade student achievement. Parent educational decision-making, parent/community collaboration, and fifth-grade student achievement are continuous variables. For research question six, the data were further examined using an independent samples t-test to determine if a statistically significant relationship exists between parents' attendance at academic community outreach events and fifth-grade student achievement. The independent variable, parent participation in academic

community outreach events, is a categorical variable representing whether the parent attended academic community outreach events during the school year. The dependent variable, fifth-grade STAAR achievement, is a continuous variable. Statistical significance was measured using a p-value of 0.05 for this study, and Cohen's *d* was used to measure effect size.

Qualitative

Data obtained from the focus groups were analyzed using a thematic analysis process. Following transcription of focus group recordings, an inductive coding process was used to analyze the qualitative data. To answer research questions seven and eight, focus group data were analyzed for emergent themes using NVivo software, and were coded to identify patterns and themes. After the transcripts were examined, a color code system was used in order to identify the emergent themes. This code was used to describe the relationships between perceptions of parents related to their participation in education and in academic community outreach events and its perceived effect on student achievement. Once these themes were established, the researcher displayed them on a series of charts and graphs. The findings were then recorded and conclusions drawn based on the data.

Validity

The qualitative analysis process included validation by using triangulation of individual parent responses. In order to increase validity, data obtained from the surveys and focus groups were compared and cross-checked among participants. The responses received from the focus group process were subject to member-checking by having parent participants review the preliminary results and transcripts in order to enhance the accuracy of the responses provided as well as the researcher's interpretation of the data. The focus group questions and results were peer reviewed by experienced educators,

including district level administrators, to ensure the questions allowed the researcher to collect the data needed to answer the research question. The peer reviews served the purpose of obtaining feedback related to questions posed to parents about their attitudes about academic community outreach events and their perceived effect on student achievement.

Privacy and Ethical Considerations

The researcher obtained permission to conduct the study from the UHCL's CPHS and the participating school district's IRB before collecting data. The name of the school district in which the study was conducted is not mentioned in the study, nor are the individual names of the parent participants. A survey cover letter was attached to the survey stating the purpose of the study, ensuring that participants were aware their participation was voluntary, and their responses and identities will remain completely confidential.

The researcher used methods to protect confidentiality during the qualitative component of the study. Participants in focus groups filled out and signed an informed consent form, which made clear the risks and rewards of participation in the study. Furthermore, the informed consent form described the methods to be used in the study and what the participants could expect should they choose to engage in the study. Participants were notified that their participation was completely voluntary, and that identities will remain confidential during reporting. During the focus group process, every attempt was made to be as objective as possible. During the qualitative coding phase, the researcher continuously safeguarded against subjective interpretations as themes emerged. The data collected are stored on a computer hard drive and on a flash drive. Both the hard drive and the flash drive are password protected. The computer is

kept in a locked office. The flash drive is stored in a safe for five years, after which time the data will be destroyed.

Limitations of the Study

This study had several limitations. The first of the limitations of this study was the single focus on fifth-grade learners. It is possible the dynamics between parent participation on student achievement varies from grade level to grade level. One might expect that the level of parent participation would be greater in primary and elementary levels than it would be in the secondary level of public education.

The second limitation was that it was assumed that all 2017-2018 fifth-grade students in the participating district began on the same academic level. This is almost certainly not the case. Students bring many factors to the table when acquiring knowledge. For one thing, each student brings his or her own unique background knowledge about a concept. Therefore, the students in this study most likely did not begin on the same level.

Additionally, the third limitation of this study was the weather during the 2017-2018 school year. The participating district experienced multiple weather phenomena that may have affected the outcome of the measured year's high-stakes testing. One of these phenomena was Hurricane Harvey, a Category Four storm that hit the central coast of the Gulf of Mexico on August 25, 2017. Harvey brought with it record-breaking amounts of rainfall which devastated the Houston area, causing billions of dollars worth of damage and closing affected school districts for two weeks. Furthermore, an ice storm in the winter closed local school districts for two days. With the losses in instruction time caused by both of these weather phenomena, fifth-grade academic achievement may have been affected.

Fourth, given that the PASS is a self-administered survey, there could be limitations concerned with this method. For one, who the respondent is cannot be ensured. The cover letter clearly states that parents/guardians are the intended recipients and therefore participants, but the researcher cannot be completely sure that the person who received and completed the survey was the parent/guardian. Additionally, the PASS survey requires reading and language skills. The instrument was provided in both English and Spanish. However, one cannot assume the recipient is proficient enough in reading and language skills to completely comprehend the questions.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the dynamics between parent participation and fifth-grade student achievement. This chapter is intended to describe the methodology of this mixed-method study in detail. The quantitative portion of this study used a sample of fifth-grade parents from seven elementary schools in a large school district in southeast Texas. Data were collected from the sample using archived sign-in sheets, PASS questionnaires, and student STAAR scores in fifth-grade science. The quantitative data collected was analyzed using Pearson product-moment correlations and independent samples t-tests which examined the dynamics between parent participation in education and fifth-grade student achievement. The qualitative portion of the study used focus group discussions to gather the perceptions of parents from the seven elementary schools who have participated in academic community outreach events. The information collected from the surveys was analyzed and coded to produce a descriptive overall response. The findings from this methodology will be reported in Chapter Four of this study.

CHAPTER IV:

RESULTS

The purpose of this study is to examine the dynamics between parent participation and fifth-grade student achievement. This chapter presents the findings of the quantitative and qualitative data analysis of the study. First an explanation of the participants' demographics of the study are presented, followed by the results for each of the eight research questions. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings.

Participant Demographics

One hundred fifty-three parents consented to participate in the study by completing the *Parents and School Survey* (PASS). Parents who completed the PASS and had attended at least one academic community outreach event (ACOE) were matched with parents who had not attended any academic community outreach events. These ACOE were held throughout the school year in the evenings, with at least one event pertaining to each subject area. During the events, activities in math, reading, and science were provided in which parents and students could participate together. Additionally, 12 parents participated in the focus group sessions. Table 4.1 provides specific participant demographics for enrolled children of participants in the survey. Of the 153 participants' children, 65 (42.5%) were male and 88 (57.5%) were female. Twenty-one (13.7%) of the participants' children were African American, six (3.9%) were American Indian, one (0.7%) was Asian, 109 (71.2%) were Hispanic, and 16 (10.5%) were White. Forty of the participants (26.1%) were considered English Learners and nine (5.9%) were receiving Special Education services. Table 4.2 provides specific participant demographics for the matched sample. Of the 58 participants' children in the matched sample, 26 (44.8%) were male and 32 (55.2%) were female. Four (6.9%) of the participants' children were African American, four (3.4%) were American Indian, 48

(82.8%) were Hispanic, and four (6.9%) were White. Table 4.3 provides specific participant demographics for enrolled children of participants in the focus groups. Of the 12 focus group members' children, five (41.7%) were male and seven (58.3%) were female. Two (16.7%) of the participants' children were African American, nine (75.0%) were Hispanic, and one (8.3%) was White. Four of the participants (33.3%) were considered English Learners and one (8.3%) was receiving Special Education services.

Table 4.1

Demographics of Enrolled Children of Participants in Survey

	District	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Male	42.5	60.0	56.3	33.3	43.5	28.6	34.8	34.6
Female	57.5	40.0	43.7	66.7	56.5	71.4	65.2	65.4
African American	13.7	23.3	25.0	4.8	0.0	28.6	13.0	7.7
American Indian	3.9	6.7	18.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.3	0.0
Asian	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.8
Hispanic	71.2	60.0	43.8	90.5	91.3	71.4	78.3	61.5
White	10.5	10.0	12.5	4.8	8.7	0.0	4.3	26.9
ELL	26.1	23.3	12.5	38.1	52.2	7.1	34.8	7.8
Special Education	5.9	10.0	12.5	0.0	4.3	0.0	8.7	3.8

Table 4.2

Demographics of Matched Sample

	Attended at least one ACOE	Attended no ACOE
	(%)	(%)
Male	44.8	44.8
Female	55.2	55.2
African American	6.9	6.9
Hispanic	82.8	82.8
White	6.9	6.9
American Indian	3.4	3.4

Table 4.3

Demographics of Enrolled Children of Focus Group Participants

	District	Focus Groups
	(%)	(%)
Male	51.9	41.7
Female	48.9	58.3
African American	11.3	16.7
Hispanic	78.4	75.0
White	7.4	8.3
English Learner	31.9	33.3
Special Education	5.9	8.3

Research Question One

Research question one, *Does a statistically significant relationship exist between parent academic assistance at home and fifth-grade student achievement?*, was measured using frequencies and percentages calculated from responses to the PASS and then by using a Pearson's product-moment correlation test to determine if there is a significant relationship between parent academic assistance at home and fifth-grade student achievement. Table 4.4 displays the Pearson's product-moment correlation (r) for parent academic assistance at home using the PASS and student achievement (reading, mathematics, science, and overall achievement) using archived STAAR scores.

Table 4.4

Relationship Between Parent Academic Assistance at Home and Student Achievement

	Reading	Mathematics	Science	Overall
N	153	153	152	153
r -value	.240	.265	.244	.273
p -value	.003*	.001*	.002*	.001*
r^2	.058	.070	.060	.075

*Statistically Significant ($p < .05$)

Results of the Pearson's product-moment correlation indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between parent academic assistance at home and fifth-grade reading achievement, $r = .240$, $p = .003$, $r^2 = .058$. Approximately 6.0% of the variance in fifth-grade STAAR reading achievement can be attributed to parent academic assistance at home. There is a positive relationship between parent academic assistance at home and fifth-grade STAAR reading achievement. The more parents provided academic assistance at home to their children, the higher their child's STAAR reading achievement. Furthermore, results of the Pearson's product-moment correlation

indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between parent academic assistance at home and fifth-grade mathematics achievement, $r = .265, p = .001, r^2 = .070$. Approximately 7.0% of the variance in fifth-grade STAAR mathematics achievement can be attributed to parent academic assistance at home. There is a positive relationship between parent academic assistance at home and fifth-grade STAAR mathematics achievement. The more parents provided academic assistance at home to their children, the higher their child's STAAR mathematics achievement.

Additionally, results of the Pearson's product-moment correlation indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between parent academic assistance at home and fifth-grade science achievement, $r = .244, p = .002, r^2 = .06$. Approximately 6.0% of the variance in fifth-grade STAAR science achievement can be attributed to parent academic assistance at home. There is a positive relationship between parent academic assistance at home and fifth-grade STAAR science achievement. The more parents provided academic assistance at home to their children, the higher their child's STAAR science achievement. Finally, results of the Pearson's product-moment correlation indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between parent academic assistance at home and fifth-grade overall achievement, $r = .273, p = .001, r^2 = .075$. Approximately 8.0% of the variance in fifth-grade STAAR overall achievement can be attributed to parent academic assistance at home. There is a positive relationship between parent academic assistance at home and fifth-grade STAAR overall achievement. The more parents provided academic assistance at home to their children, the higher their child's STAAR achievement in general.

Tables 4.5 and 4.6 show the responses/collapsed responses to parent academic assistance at home. Parent academic assistance at home was measured using the combined scores of the subscales: (a) parenting, and (d) learning at home. This construct

was measured using items 2, 4, 5, 9, 14, 16, 18, and 19 of the PASS. The majority of respondents (65.4%) reported *Strongly Agree/Agree* to the statement “My child’s schoolwork is always displayed in our home,” whereas only 13.1% indicated that they *Strongly Disagree/Disagree*. When asked about explaining difficult ideas to their children, 84.3% of participants *Strongly Agree/Agree* that they frequently explain those ideas, while 5.2% *Strongly Disagree/Disagree*. The majority (93.5%) of parents/guardians *Strongly Agree/Agree* that they make it a habit to give compliments to their students for positive actions, while only 3.9% *Strongly Disagree/Disagree*. When asked about reading to their children every day, 31.4% *Strongly Agree/Agree* and 28.1% *Strongly Disagree/Disagree*. The majority of respondents (75.2%) *Strongly Agree/Agree* with the statement “There are many children’s books in our house,” while 9.2% responded *Strongly Disagree/Disagree*. The majority (73.2%) of parents/guardians *Strongly Disagree/Disagree* with the idea of their child missing several days each semester, whereas 9.8% *Strongly Agree/Agree*. Fewer participants (17.1%) *Strongly Agree/Agree* with the notion that they do not understand the assignments their child brings home, while the majority (51%) *Strongly Disagree/Disagree*. Finally, with regards to reading books at home regularly, 50.3% of parents surveyed *Strongly Agree/Agree* that this is a regular activity in their home, whereas 16.3% *Strongly Disagree/Disagree*.

Table 4.5

Responses to Parent Academic Assistance at Home (%)

Survey Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Partially Agree/ Partially Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2. My child's schoolwork is always displayed in our home.	23.5 (n = 36)	41.8 (n = 64)	33.0 (n = 33)	10.5 (n = 16)	2.6 (n = 4)
4. I frequently explain difficult ideas to my child when she/he doesn't understand.	42.1 (n = 63)	43.1 (n = 66)	10.5 (n = 16)	2.6 (n = 4)	2.6 (n = 4)
5. Every time my child does something well at school I compliment him/her.	67.3 (n = 103)	26.1 (n = 40)	2.6 (n = 4)	0.0 (n = 0)	3.9 (n = 6)
9. I read to my child every day.	11.1 (n = 17)	20.3 (n = 31)	40.5 (n = 62)	20.9 (n = 32)	7.2 (n = 11)
14. There are many children's books in our house.	40.5 (n = 62)	34.6 (n = 53)	15.7 (n = 24)	7.2 (n = 11)	2.0 (n = 3)
16. My child misses school several days each semester.	3.3 (n = 5)	6.5 (n = 10)	17.0 (n = 26)	30.1 (n = 46)	43.1 (n = 66)
18. I don't understand the assignments my child brings home.	5.9 (n = 9)	11.8 (n = 18)	31.4 (n = 48)	27.5 (n = 42)	23.5 (n = 36)
19. Reading books is a regular activity in our home.	20.3 (n = 31)	30.1 (n = 46)	33.3 (n = 51)	12.4 (n = 19)	3.9 (n = 6)

Table 4.6

Collapsed Responses to Parent Academic Assistance at Home (%)

Survey Item	Strongly Agree/Agree	Partially Agree/Partially Disagree	Strongly Disagree/Disagree
2. My child's schoolwork is always displayed in our home.	65.4 (n = 100)	33.0 (n = 33)	13.1 (n = 20)
4. I frequently explain difficult ideas to my child when she/he doesn't understand.	84.3 (n = 129)	10.5 (n = 16)	5.2 (n = 8)
5. Every time my child does something well at school I compliment him/her.	93.5 (n = 143)	2.6 (n = 4)	3.9 (n = 6)
9. I read to my child every day.	31.4 (n = 48)	40.5 (n = 62)	28.1 (n = 43)
14. There are many children's books in our house.	75.2 (n = 115)	15.7 (n = 24)	9.2 (n = 14)
16. My child misses school several days each semester.	9.8 (n = 15)	17.0 (n = 26)	73.2 (n = 112)
18. I don't understand the assignments my child brings home.	17.6 (n = 27)	31.4 (n = 48)	51.0 (n = 78)
19. Reading books is a regular activity in our home.	50.3 (n = 77)	33.3 (n = 51)	16.3 (n = 25)

Research Question Two

Research question two, *Does a statistically significant relationship exist between parent/school communication and fifth-grade student achievement?*, was measured using frequencies and percentages calculated from responses to the PASS and then by using a Pearson's product-moment correlation test to determine if there is a significant relationship between parent/school communication and fifth-grade student achievement.

Table 4.7 displays the Pearson's product-moment correlation (r) for parent/school communication using the PASS and student achievement (reading, mathematics, science, and overall achievement) using archived STAAR scores.

Table 4.7

Relationship Between Parent/School Communication and Student Achievement

	Reading	Mathematics	Science	Overall
N	153	153	152	153
r -value	.278	.330	.257	.299
p -value	.001*	<.001*	.001*	<.001*
r^2	.077	.109	.066	.089

*Statistically Significant ($p < .05$)

Results of the Pearson's product-moment correlation indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between parent/school communication and fifth-grade reading achievement, $r = .278$, $p = .001$, $r^2 = .077$. Approximately 8.0% of the variance in fifth-grade STAAR reading achievement can be attributed to parent/school communication. There is a positive relationship between parent/school communication and fifth-grade STAAR reading achievement. The more parents and schools communicated with each other, the higher their child's STAAR reading achievement. Furthermore, results of the Pearson's product-moment correlation indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between parent/school communication and fifth-grade mathematics achievement, $r = .330$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .109$. Approximately 11.0% of the variance in fifth-grade STAAR mathematics achievement can be attributed to parent/school communication. There is a positive relationship between parent/school communication and fifth-grade STAAR mathematics achievement. The more parents

and schools communicated with each other, the higher their child's STAAR mathematics achievement.

Additionally, results of the Pearson's product-moment correlation indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between parent/school communication and fifth-grade science achievement, $r = .257, p = .001, r^2 = .066$. Approximately 7.0% of the variance in fifth-grade STAAR science achievement can be attributed to parent/school communication. There is a positive relationship between parent/school communication and fifth-grade STAAR science achievement. The more parents and schools communicated with each other, the higher their child's STAAR science achievement. Finally, results of the Pearson's product-moment correlation indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between parent/school communication and fifth-grade overall achievement, $r = .299, p < .001, r^2 = .089$. Approximately 9.0% of the variance in fifth-grade STAAR overall achievement can be attributed to parent/school communication. There is a positive relationship between parent/school communication and fifth-grade STAAR overall achievement. The more parents and schools communicated with each other, the higher their child's STAAR overall achievement.

Tables 4.8 and 4.9 show the responses/collapsed responses to parent/school communication. Parent/school communication was measured using items 3, 6, 7, and 17 of the PASS. The majority of respondents (79.1%) reported *Strongly Agree/Agree* to the statement "If my child misbehaved in school, I would know about it soon afterward," whereas only 5.2% indicated that they *Strongly Disagree/Disagree*. When asked how they feel about talking with their child's principal, 12.4% of participants *Strongly Agree/Agree* that this activity makes them uncomfortable, while 75.2% *Strongly Disagree/Disagree*. The majority (75.8%) of parents/guardians *Strongly Agree/Agree* that they always know how well their child is doing in school while only 6.5% *Strongly*

Disagree/Disagree. When asked about talking with their child's current teacher, 3.3% *Strongly Agree/Agree* that this activity makes them somewhat uncomfortable and 83.7% *Strongly Disagree/Disagree.*

Table 4.8

Responses to Parent/School Communication for All Participants (%)

Survey Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Partially Agree/ Partially Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3. If my child misbehaved at school, I would know about it soon afterward.	47.1 (n = 72)	32.0 (n = 49)	15.7 (n = 24)	2.6 (n = 4)	2.6 (n = 4)
6. Talking with my child's principal makes me uncomfortable.	3.3 (n = 5)	9.2 (n = 14)	12.4 (n = 19)	38.6 (n = 50)	36.6 (n = 56)
7. I always know how well my child is doing in school.	36.6 (n = 56)	39.2 (n = 60)	17.6 (n = 27)	4.6 (n = 7)	2.0 (n = 3)
17. Talking with my child's current teacher makes me somewhat uncomfortable.	1.3 (n = 2)	2.0 (n = 3)	13.1 (n = 20)	38.6 (n = 59)	45.1 (n = 69)

Table 4.9

Collapsed Responses to Parent/School Communication (%)

Survey Item	Strongly Agree/Agree	Partially Agree/Partially Disagree	Strongly Disagree/Disagree
3. If my child misbehaved at school, I would know about it soon afterward.	79.1 (n = 121)	15.7 (n = 24)	5.2 (n = 8)
6. Talking with my child's principal makes me uncomfortable.	12.4 (n = 19)	12.4 (n = 19)	75.2 (n = 115)
7. I always know how well my child is doing in school.	75.8 (n = 116)	17.6 (n = 27)	6.5 (n = 10)
17. Talking with my child's current teacher makes me somewhat uncomfortable.	3.3 (n = 5)	13.1 (n = 20)	83.7 (n = 128)

Research Question Three

Research question three, *Does a statistically significant relationship exist between parent volunteering at school and fifth-grade student achievement?*, was measured using frequencies and percentages calculated from responses to the PASS and then by using a Pearson's product-moment correlation test to determine if there is a significant relationship between parent volunteering at school and fifth-grade student achievement. Table 4.10 displays the Pearson's product-moment correlation (r) for parent volunteering at school using the PASS and student achievement (reading, mathematics, science, and overall achievement) using archived STAAR scores.

Table 4.10

Relationship Between Parent Volunteering at School and Student Achievement

	Reading	Mathematics	Science	Overall
N	153	153	152	153
r -value	.070	.193	.149	.156
p -value	.389	.017*	.066	.056
r^2	.005	.037	.022	.024

*Statistically Significant ($p < .05$)

Results of the Pearson's product-moment correlation indicate that no relationship exists between parent volunteering at school and fifth-grade reading achievement, $r = .070$, $p = .389$. There is no relationship between parent volunteering at school and fifth-grade STAAR reading achievement. However, results of the Pearson's product-moment correlation indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between parent volunteering at school and fifth-grade mathematics achievement, $r = .193$, $p = .017$, $r^2 = .037$. Approximately 4.0% of the variance in fifth-grade STAAR mathematics achievement can be attributed to parent volunteering at school. There is a positive

relationship between parent volunteering at school and fifth-grade STAAR mathematics achievement. The more parents volunteer at their child's school, the higher their child's STAAR mathematics achievement. Results of the Pearson's product-moment correlation indicate that no relationship exists between parent volunteering at school and fifth-grade science achievement, $r = .149, p = .066$. There is no relationship between parent volunteering at school and fifth-grade STAAR science achievement. Finally, results of the Pearson's product-moment correlation indicate that no relationship exists between parent volunteering at school and fifth-grade overall achievement, $r = .156, p = .056$. There is no relationship between parent volunteering at school and fifth-grade STAAR overall achievement.

Tables 4.11 and 4.12 show the responses/collapsed responses to parent volunteering at school. Parent volunteering at school was measured using items 1, 12, 15, and 23 of the PASS. The majority of respondents (87.6%) reported *Strongly Agree/Agree* to the statement "I feel very comfortable visiting my child's school," whereas only 3.3% indicated that they *Strongly Disagree/Disagree*. When asked about how many times they visited their child's school in the last year, 41.8% of participants *Strongly Agree/Agree* that they visited the classroom several times, while 36.6% *Strongly Disagree/Disagree*. The majority (66.7%) of parents/guardians *Strongly Agree/Agree* that they attended activities at their child's school several times in the past year, while 20.9% *Strongly Disagree/Disagree*. When asked about volunteering at their child's school, only 14.4% *Strongly Agree/Agree* that they volunteered at their child's school at least three times and 67.3% *Strongly Disagree/Disagree*.

Table 4.11

Responses to Parent Volunteering at School for All Participants (%)

Survey Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Partially Agree/ Partially Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I feel very comfortable visiting my child's school.	54.9 (n = 84)	32.7 (n = 50)	9.2 (n = 14)	1.3 (n = 2)	2.0 (n = 3)
12. I have visited my child's classroom several times in the past year.	15.0 (n = 23)	26.8 (n = 41)	21.6 (n = 33)	28.1 (n = 43)	8.5 (n = 13)
15. In the past 12 months I have attended activities at my child's school several times.	37.9 (n = 58)	28.8 (n = 44)	12.4 (n = 19)	16.3 (n = 25)	4.6 (n = 7)
23. In the past 12 months I volunteered at my child's school at least 3 times.	7.8 (n = 12)	6.5 (n = 10)	18.3 (n = 28)	41.2 (n = 63)	26.1 (n = 40)

Table 4.12

Collapsed Responses to Parent Volunteering at School (%)

Survey Item	Strongly Agree/Agree	Partially Agree/Partially Disagree	Strongly Disagree/Disagree
1. I feel very comfortable visiting my child's school.	87.6 (n = 134)	9.2 (n = 14)	3.3 (n = 5)
12. I have visited my child's classroom several times in the past year.	41.8 (n = 64)	21.6 (n = 33)	36.6 (n = 56)
15. In the past 12 months I have attended activities at my child's school several times.	66.7 (n = 102)	12.4 (n = 19)	20.9 (n = 32)
23. In the past 12 months I volunteered at my child's school at least 3 times.	14.4 (n = 22)	18.3 (n = 28)	67.3 (n = 103)

Research Question Four

Research question four, *Does a statistically significant relationship exist between parent educational decision-making and fifth-grade student achievement?*, was measured using frequencies and percentages calculated from responses to the PASS and then by using a Pearson's product-moment correlation test to determine if there is a significant relationship between parent educational decision-making and fifth-grade student achievement. Table 4.13 displays the Pearson's product-moment correlation (r) for parent educational decision-making using the PASS and student achievement (reading, mathematics, science, and overall achievement) using archived STAAR scores.

Table 4.13

Relationship Between Parent Educational Decision-Making and Student Achievement

	Reading	Mathematics	Science	Overall
N	153	153	152	153
r -value	-.057	.023	-.091	-.068
p -value	.481	.776	.266	.407
r^2	.003	.001	.008	.136

*Statistically Significant ($p < .05$)

Results of the Pearson's product-moment correlation indicate that no relationship exists between parent educational decision-making and fifth-grade reading achievement, $r = -.057$, $p = .481$. There is no relationship between parent educational decision-making and fifth-grade STAAR reading achievement. Also, results of the Pearson's product-moment correlation indicate that no relationship exists between parent educational decision-making and fifth-grade mathematics achievement, $r = .023$, $p = .776$. There is no relationship between parent educational decision-making and fifth-grade STAAR mathematics achievement. Additionally, results of the Pearson's product-moment

correlation indicate that no relationship exists between parent educational decision-making and fifth-grade science achievement, $r = -.091$, $p = .266$. There is no relationship between parent educational decision-making and fifth-grade STAAR science achievement. Finally, results of the Pearson's product-moment correlation indicate that no relationship exists between parent educational decision-making and fifth-grade overall achievement, $r = -.068$, $p = .407$. There is no relationship between parent educational decision-making and fifth-grade STAAR overall achievement.

Tables 4.14 and 4.15 show the responses/collapsed responses to parent educational decision-making. Parent educational decision-making was measured using items 8, 13, 21, and 22 of the PASS. The majority of respondents (67.3%) reported Strongly Disagree/Disagree to the statement "I am confused about my legal rights as the parent of a student," whereas only 11.1% indicated that they Strongly Agree/Agree. When asked about making suggestions to the teacher to help their child learn, 32% of participants Strongly Agree/Agree that they participated in that activity, while 40.5% Strongly Disagree/Disagree. The majority (47.1%) of parents/guardians Strongly Agree/Agree that they understand the laws governing schools well, while 20.9% Strongly Disagree/Disagree. When asked about attending school board meetings, only 14.4% Strongly Agree/Agree that they attended several school board meetings in the last 12 months and 66% Strongly Disagree/Disagree.

Table 4.14

Responses to Parent Educational Decision-Making for All Participants (%)

Survey Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Partially Agree/ Partially Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
8. I am confused about my legal rights as the parent of a student.	4.6 (n = 7)	6.5 (n = 10)	21.6 (n = 33)	31.4 (n = 48)	35.9 (n = 55)
13. I have made suggestions to my child's teacher about how to help my child learn.	8.5 (n = 13)	23.5 (n = 36)	27.5 (n = 42)	32.0 (n = 49)	8.5 (n = 13)
21. I know the laws governing schools well.	17.6 (n = 27)	29.4 (n = 45)	32.0 (n = 49)	17.0 (n = 26)	3.9 (n = 6)
22. In the past 12 months I attended several school board meetings.	4.6 (n = 7)	9.8 (n = 15)	19.6 (n = 30)	40.5 (n = 62)	25.5 (n = 39)

Table 4.15

Collapsed Responses to Parent Educational Decision-Making (%)

Survey Item	Strongly Agree/Agree	Partially Agree/Partially Disagree	Strongly Disagree/Disagree
8. I am confused about my legal rights as the parent of a student.	11.1 (n = 17)	21.6 (n = 33)	67.3 (n = 103)
13. I have made suggestions to my child's teacher about how to help my child learn.	32.0 (n = 49)	27.5 (n = 42)	40.5 (n = 62)
21. I know the laws governing schools well.	47.1 (n = 72)	32.0 (n = 49)	20.9 (n = 32)
22. In the past 12 months I attended several school board meetings.	14.4 (n = 22)	19.6 (n = 30)	66.0 (n = 101)

Research Question Five

Research question five, *Does a statistically significant relationship exist between parent/community collaboration and fifth-grade student achievement?*, was measured using frequencies and percentages calculated from responses to the PASS and then by using a Pearson's product-moment correlation test to determine if there is a significant relationship between parent/community collaboration and fifth-grade student achievement. Table 4.16 displays the Pearson's product-moment correlation (r) for parent/community collaboration using the PASS and student achievement (reading, mathematics, science, and overall achievement) using archived STAAR scores.

Table 4.16

Relationship Between Parent/Community Collaboration and Student Achievement

	Reading	Mathematics	Science	Overall
N	153	153	152	153
r -value	.133	.056	-.006	.035
p -value	.101	.489	.944	.670
r^2	.018	.003	.000	.001

*Statistically Significant ($p < .05$)

Results of the Pearson's product-moment correlation indicate that no relationship exists between parent/community collaboration and fifth-grade reading achievement, $r = .133$, $p = .101$. There is no relationship between parent/community collaboration and fifth-grade STAAR reading achievement. Also, results of the Pearson's product-moment correlation indicate that no relationship exists between parent/community collaboration and fifth-grade mathematics achievement, $r = .056$, $p = .489$. There is no relationship between parent/community collaboration and fifth-grade STAAR mathematics achievement. Additionally, results of the Pearson's product-moment correlation indicate

that no relationship exists between parent/community collaboration and fifth-grade science achievement, $r = -.006$, $p = .944$. There is no relationship between parent/community collaboration and fifth-grade STAAR science achievement. Finally, results of the Pearson's product-moment correlation indicate that no relationship exists between parent/community collaboration and fifth-grade overall achievement, $r = .035$, $p = .670$. There is no relationship between parent/community collaboration and fifth-grade STAAR overall achievement.

Tables 4.17 and 4.18 show the responses/collapsed responses to parent/community collaboration. Parent/community collaboration was measured using items 10, 11, 20, and 24 of the PASS. The majority of respondents (37.9%) reported *Strongly Disagree/Disagree* to the statement "I talk with other parents frequently about educational issues," whereas 27.5% indicated that they *Strongly Agree/Agree*. When asked about whether their child attends community programs, such as YMCA and parks/recreation activities, 27.5% of participants *Strongly Agree/Agree* that their children participated, while 49.7% *Strongly Disagree/Disagree*. The majority (60.1%) of parents/guardians *Strongly Disagree/Disagree* that they would not know how to get academic help for their struggling student, while 28.8% *Strongly Agree/Agree*. When asked about their knowledge of youth programs in the community, only 26.8% *Strongly Agree/Agree* that they are aware of these programs and 48.4% *Strongly Disagree/Disagree*.

Table 4.17

Responses to Parent/Community Collaboration for All Participants (%)

Survey Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Partially Agree/ Partially Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
10. I talk with other parents frequently about educational issues.	11.1 (n = 17)	16.3 (n = 25)	34.6 (n = 53)	26.8 (n = 41)	11.1 (n = 17)
11. My child attends community programs (e.g., YMCA, park/rec, community theater)	12.4 (n = 19)	15.0 (n = 23)	22.9 (n = 35)	34.0 (n = 52)	15.7 (n = 24)
20. If my child was having trouble in school I would not know how to get extra help for him/her.	11.8 (n = 18)	17.0 (n = 26)	11.1 (n = 17)	29.4 (n = 45)	30.7 (n = 47)
24. I know about many programs for youth in my community.	8.5 (n = 13)	18.3 (n = 28)	24.8 (n = 38)	33.3 (n = 51)	15.0 (n = 23)

Table 4.18

Collapsed Responses to Parent/Community Collaboration (%)

Survey Item	Strongly Agree/Agree	Partially Agree/Partially Disagree	Strongly Disagree/Disagree
10. I talk with other parents frequently about educational issues.	27.5 (n = 42)	34.6 (n = 53)	37.9 (n = 58)
11. My child attends community programs (e.g., YMCA, park/rec, community theater) regularly.	27.5 (n = 42)	22.9 (n = 35)	49.7 (n = 76)
20. If my child was having trouble in school I would not know how to get extra help for him/her.	28.8 (n = 44)	11.1 (n = 17)	60.1 (n = 92)
24. I know about many programs for youth in my community.	26.8 (n = 41)	24.8 (n = 38)	48.4 (n = 74)

Research Question Six

Research question six, *Does parent participation in academic community outreach events influence fifth-grade student achievement?*, was measured using an independent samples t-test to determine if parent participation in academic community outreach events influences student achievement. Table 4.19 displays the independent samples t-test comparing fifth-grade STAAR reading achievement groups of students whose parents “attended one or more academic community outreach events” or “attended no events.” The results of the independent samples t-test indicated that parent attendance at academic community outreach events did not influence 2018 fifth-grade reading achievement, $t(56) = .893, p = .376$. Parent attendance at academic community outreach events did not influence student scores in reading.

Table 4.19

Participation in Academic Community Outreach Events Influence on 2018 Reading Achievement

Participation	N	M	SD	<i>t</i> -value	df	<i>p</i> -value
1. One or more events	29	1,545.34	119.18	.893	56	.376
2. No events	29	1,514.69	141.28			

*Statistically significant ($p < .05$)

Table 4.20 displays the independent samples t-test comparing fifth-grade STAAR mathematics achievement groups of students whose parents “attended one or more academic community outreach events” or “attended no events.” The results of the independent samples t-test indicated that parent attendance at academic community

outreach events did not influence 2018 fifth-grade mathematics achievement, $t(56) = 1.417, p = .162$. Parent attendance at academic community outreach events did not influence student scores in mathematics.

Table 4.20

Participation in Academic Community Outreach Events Influence on 2018 Mathematics Achievement

Participation	N	M	SD	<i>t</i> -value	df	<i>p</i> -value
1. One or more events	29	1,662.07	75.99	1.417	56	.162
2. No events	29	1,629.86	95.95			

*Statistically significant ($p < .05$)

Table 4.21 displays the independent samples t-test comparing fifth-grade STAAR science achievement groups of students whose parents “attended one or more academic community outreach events” or “attended no events.” The results of the independent samples t-test indicated that parent participation in academic community outreach events influenced 2018 science achievement, $t(56) = 2.884, p = .006, d = .7574$ (large effect size), $r^2 = .1255$. Students whose parents attended one or more academic community outreach event ($M = 3,865.55$) are, on average, reported to have higher 2018 science achievement than students whose parents attended no events ($M = 3,546.9$). Approximately 13.0% of the variance in fifth-grade science achievement can be attributed to parent participation in academic community outreach events.

Table 4.21

Participation in Academic Community Outreach Events Influence on 2018 Science Achievement

Participation	N	M	SD	<i>t</i> -value	df	<i>p</i> -value	<i>d</i>
1. One or more events	29	3,865.55	461.25	2.884	56	.006*	.7574
2. No events	29	3,546.9	375.77				

*Statistically significant ($p < .05$)

Table 4.22 displays the independent samples *t*-test comparing fifth-grade STAAR overall achievement groups of students whose parents “attended one or more academic community outreach events” or “attended no events.” The results of the independent samples *t*-test indicated that parent participation in academic community outreach events influenced 2018 overall fifth-grade achievement, $t(56) = 2.472$, $p = .016$, $d = .6492$ (medium effect size), $r^2 = .0954$. Students whose parents attended one or more academic community outreach event ($M = 7,072.97$) are, on average, reported to have higher 2018 overall achievement than students whose parents attended no events ($M = 6,691.45$). Approximately 10.0% of the variance in fifth-grade overall achievement can be attributed to parent participation in academic community outreach events.

Table 4.22

Participation in Academic Community Outreach Events Influence on 2018 Overall Achievement

Participation	N	M	SD	<i>t</i> -value	df	<i>p</i> -value	<i>d</i>
1. One or more events	29	7,072.97	607.18	2.472	56	.016*	.6492
2. No events	29	6,691.45	567.46				

*Statistically significant ($p < .05$)

Research Question Seven

Research question seven, *What are parent perceptions regarding their own various facets of participation in education and its effect on student emotional well-being and student achievement?*, was answered by using a qualitative inductive coding process. In an effort to gain a greater understanding of parents' perceptions of their own participation in the education of their children and its effect on student achievement and student emotional well-being, 12 parents participated in focus groups regarding the issue. Of the focus group members, three (25.0%) were male and nine (75%) were female; two (16.7%) were African American, nine (75%) were Hispanic, and one (8.3%) was white. The emergent themes and subthemes obtained from parents' responses are provided below, including samples of the respondents' comments. The reader should be aware that, of the 12 parents who participated in the focus groups, eight (66.7%) had a child who passed the 2018 STAAR Mathematics test, 12 (100.0%) had a child who passed the 2018 STAAR Reading test, and 10 (83.3%) had a child who passed the 2018 STAAR Science test.

Value Parents Place on Education

During the focus group sessions, much discussion was had by the participants on the importance of education. Participants talked about the importance of their children getting good grades now in order for a better chance at higher education, a good job, and great future. One participant, when talking about summer school opportunities said, “My son passed, but I registered him for summer school anyway so he could learn something extra. I prefer to have him at school rather than having him just playing bound at home.” Another parent emphasized the importance of higher education in order to get better job opportunities. When speaking to her son, she expressed:

If you don’t get an education, you’re going to be picking up trash. I don’t want that for you. Your dad and I struggle so you can have a better life. Not so you can be like us. We don’t want you living paycheck to paycheck, you know? We want you to be successful!

Regarding the same subject, another parent conveyed, “I mean, just talking about college; talking about their future. We talk about the future, like, what is he passionate about other than playing Fortnite and being some kind of gamer.”

Additionally, parents discussed opportunities their children had to visit universities, and how important the parents believed these experiences were in order to get students excited about higher education. Parents show they place value on education when they become involved in this way. When talking about her children, one parent stated, “I usually take them, you know, to the university so they can see the college students. They could see the atmosphere. Because it does, you know, make them like, ‘Oh, you know, I want to come here.’” Finally, parents expressed the need to set a good example for their children with regard to education. One participant expressed:

I think, as parents, we need to model and give education that importance. We need to set a good example for our children. They need to know that there's expectations. They need routines. We need to, because to get them ready for college, they need to be prepared for all this.

These quotations clearly emphasized parents' insistence that their children place value on education. Across cultural lines it was clear in the focus group meeting that parents want their children to experience success in life, even, at times, that they surpass the expectations the parents had set for them. Additionally, it became clear during the course of the focus group meetings that, because parents place value on education, they were more likely to participate in the education of their child.

Reasons to Be Involved

When discussing reasons for involvement, focus group participants spoke about the need for paying attention to the education of their children in order to see them through to success. One participant stated, "Well, one does not have to wait until things are bad to be able to go to the school," signifying that simply caring about the success of their child is reason enough for being involved. The participants agreed that contributing at the school is crucial for student success. They even indicated that simply attending the focus group sessions for this study was important for their child's education. A participant indicated, "The reason we are here is an example [of why we participate]," suggesting that caring for the success of their own child and that of others draws them into participating in activities such as the current study.

Parents further pointed out that, to succeed, it is important for all elements of a child's life to be involved in his/her education as a team. One parent stated, "Let us say that [educators] have to do their part and us ours and we should do more because we are the interested ones." One element that focus group participants indicated as a reason for

being involved was the student's emotional well-being. When speaking of her child, one participant said, "She got very sad because my sister had gone to all of her events and she said the [parent conference] was more important but nobody went to see her. She felt really bad and I did too." Because of her busy schedule, she was not able to attend many of the events at the school, so the parent thought sending her sister as a substitute would suffice. This was not the case. This parent made it clear to focus group attendees that she unmistakably realized the value of being present in the educational life of her child.

Types of Participation

When discussing the various types of participation in which parents take part, participants delineated between academic assistance at home, parent-teacher communication, and volunteering at the school. While each of these facets of parent participation in education is important to the success of their children, focus group members made a clear distinction between each and described the value that type of involvement had to them.

Parent academic assistance at home. One of the main types of participation that was discussed by focus group participants was simply asking the students about their experiences at school and encouraging them in conversation. One participant declared, "I want to know what is going on. I check his notebooks. I talk with his friends." The parents asserted how important it is to support the students emotionally. One of the parents stated, "It is like I told you, it requires you to talk a lot; to talk a lot with them, encouraging them and telling them, 'I love you,' and, 'I know you can. You have to work hard.'" Another participant reported repeatedly telling her child, ". . . you have to strive and you have to come out from where you are at," conveying her desire for her child to succeed in education in order for him to have a better life than she has experienced. The

same parent said, “[Participation] is about insisting and insisting; helping him and pushing him up.”

Participants also shared that doling out consequences and rewards for achievement is an important type of participation. Parents shared how they would use incentives to increase student achievement. One participant laughed when he talked about how his son worked hard all year to earn “the XBox because he did get good grades.” They also discussed removal of privileges as punishment for poor performance in school. One parent stated, “I told his [her child’s] teacher, the one who is in charge of him, to call me, that she has my number and I will take the call ... if something happens call me and I will take his tablet away.” Another participant said, “I would take his cellphone away,” as a consequence for lack of effort.

These quotations offer evidence of parents’ perceptions that one important way they can be involved in their children’s education is to offer them support at home. This support can come in many forms, among them just checking in on a student about his or her day, or offering both rewards and consequences for academic achievement. While this type of involvement does not take place in the school, it shows that there are ways parents can feel involved in their children’s education outside of the school setting.

Parent-teacher communication. Another type of participation mentioned by 33.3% of the focus group members was communication with the teacher. These parents indicated that communication with the teacher is key to a student’s success in education. One participant stated, “I speak with the teachers. I check my son’s homework. I’m always checking to see if he delivered it or not.” Participants talked about the different means of communication in existence today and that it is not necessarily standard to visit with the teacher in person when email and other communication applications are available. One parent said, “I am constantly emailing his [her child’s] teachers;

especially when it starts getting closer to progress reports and report cards. ‘How is he? How many assignments hasn’t he turned in?’” The other parents in the focus groups simply didn’t mention parent-teacher communication as an important type of parent participation. This could simply be because, by fifth grade, many of the parents trust their children to do most of the communicating instead of themselves.

Volunteering at the school. Volunteering at the school was also a type of participation that the focus group members discussed. Five out of the 12 focus group members discussed volunteering while other parents stated they had never volunteered at the school. One parent expressed, “You know, you always have those certain moms that will help, but you get a lot of moms that just don’t help.” Another participant defended those who are unable to volunteer:

As a working parent, I understand where you are coming from. We’re limited to the after school activities like homework and projects. And I would participate in a STAAR night, or literacy night, or book fair night, or math night. I am involved, but I am very limited on the things that happen during the day. Like if there was a lunch that you could go eat with your child, I couldn’t make those things; just because it’s hard with your work schedule.

Parents did agree that volunteering at the school is supportive to the child, but also agreed that the circumstances of life make it difficult for all parents to participate in activities during and after the school day.

The statements made by focus group members sum up the many ways parents can be involved in the education of their children. Whether participating at home, communicating with the teacher, or volunteering at the school, each and every way that a parent can participate in education finds value in the eyes of the school, the parent, and the student.

Partnerships with Educators

Focus group members placed enormous importance on the need for parents to partner with members of the education community in order to facilitate the academic success of their children. Some parents felt that the principal was the key to a good partnership with the school. One parent even mentioned the value of the campus principal being bilingual in order to facilitate communication directly with parents. She stated:

It's the principal that's on campus ... our principal speaks Spanish. And when she holds meetings and stuff after school she translates. And I think that makes a big difference rather than have someone else translate. I think for the parents to see her stand up there and translate, I think that makes them [parents] feel a little more welcome.

Most participants also agreed that a partnership with teachers is vital to student success. Partnerships with teachers can refer to any way that parents and teachers take part in the success of the student, whether it be the teacher keeping the online gradebook up to date or the parent initialing the daily classroom agenda. One parent said, "It must be a team between the teachers and the parents, and not just leaving it to the teachers while we just stay home without ever going or calling or anything." However, two of the 12 focus group members also discussed the reluctance of some teachers to develop strong partnerships with parents. One parent said that some teachers "just don't open up." She indicated that so many parents desire to provide any type of help needed, whether it be direct assistance for their own child or for the classroom in general, but the teachers won't reach out.

Focus group members made it clear that having partnerships with the educators at their child's school is a vital part of students' overall success in education. Whether it be

the principal or teachers, participants indicated the importance of facilitating relationships with school staff. However, focus group members shared that they felt both parties must give effort to maintain those relationships.

Parent Participation in Education Effect

Parents who participated in focus group sessions had many positive comments about their participation in the education of their child and its effect on the child's well-being and academic achievement. Besides making the students feel more safe and secure, more persistent, and more capable, parents indicated that their participation in their child's education had a positive influence on the child's academic success.

Emotional effect. Most of the focus group participants had opinions about perceived student emotions regarding parent participation. Initially, several parents shared that their participation in education made their children feel more safe and secure. One parent, when describing their child's emotions, stated, "I believe [my participation] makes them feel safe; they feel safe because they know that there is always someone behind them watching out for them." Another parent described how she defended her child during a confrontation with the school principal, which appeared to make her child feel safe and secure:

I came and I fought. He retells the story when I came and fought. I went to fight with the school principal [giggling] because I did not want them bringing him down. I wanted them to keep him in fifth grade.

Just the fact that the student mentioned above kept telling the story shows that he was proud of the way his parent supported him in his efforts. Even though the principal wanted to retain the student, the parent clearly believed enough in him to fight for promotion. With the parent taking this risk, the student felt safer and more secure.

Another feeling conveyed by many of the focus group members was that the students felt more persistent when parents showed an interest in their education. When describing how she supported her child, one participant said, “. . . make them, like, seize strength to go up, and I would tell him, ‘Do not give up. Don’t give up. You have to succeed. You have to show everybody that you can do it.’” Another parent thought that her daughter felt more perseverant because of her participation by saying, “I’m backing her up too this year and keep supporting her on everything.” Based on the parents’ comments, they felt their children tried harder because they were involved in their education.

Furthermore, most of the participants in the focus groups indicated that their participation in the education of their children made the students feel more capable. When speaking of her son who had been retained in a grade level, one parent stated:

One time I had the problem of him being moved down. They moved him to a lower grade. Then I used to tell him, ‘You have to show those people who moved you down to another grade. Show them that you really can.’ Then he started trying harder. I could tell he was feeling more confident.

According to this parent, the child’s confidence was bolstered by her communicated belief in him. Because she told him of this belief, he took on the same belief. Another parent spoke ardently about her daughter’s greater level of effort which she attributes to parent participation, stating:

You know[,] we tell her; I mean, we’re very hands-on. And I think, I think her seeing us being more focused on it [her education] helps her to be more passionate about it. You know, ‘Mommy and Daddy thinks this is really good, so I can try harder.’

Finally, focus group members suggested that their participation in the education of their children caused excitement in the students. When speaking of her child, one parent said:

I think he needs me. He feels very happy when he sees me over there. He goes searching for me and when he sees me, he says, 'There she is!' Yes, he gets very excited when he realizes I am there and then he becomes, how can I say ... little bit, a little bit ... like, how do they say it in El Salvador? Like a little kid.

Another participant reflected on students she knew whose parents did not participate in the educational activities of their children, and the feelings it caused in that particular child, saying:

When they come back [to school] the next day they're like, 'My mom wouldn't come.' You know, they're sad because their mom didn't come. And they're like, 'Well, I told my mom, but she was taking a nap.' And it just breaks my heart. It does. I mean they so want that involvement.

These quotations make it clear that parents perceive the desire their children have for them to be a part of their education. Besides being emotionally affected by parent participation in education, focus group members also shared that they believe their participation leads to positive academic effects for their children.

Academic effect. Of all the themes that emerged regarding the effects parents see in their children due to their own involvement in education, improvement in grades was the most prevalent. Focus group members unanimously responded that they felt their participation in the education of their child had a positive effect on grades. One parent jokingly stated, "Well, we just need to squeeze them a little bit at home. Here, just look at the grades he is bringing me home." When speaking of how her participation caused her child to try harder, another participant shared:

I think it's the nerves that gets her. That it's like 'Am I going to be able to do it? Am I going to get a bad grade? Then I'm going to hear it from my mom, and I'm going to hear it from my dad.'

Parents indicated that students are aware that their performance on grade progress reports matter. One focus group member talked about her daughter giving advance notice of poor performance on a grade checkpoint:

Your expectations matter. She gets really, um, like, when her progress report or report card; she already tells me if there's going to be like a 70. She already lets me know. She's like, 'Okay, you gotta [sic] be prepared. There's a 70 coming.' But, um, other than that, at least she knows that, okay, 'You know, if I get this type of grade, my mom's really going to, you know, be on me or something.'

Furthermore, another parent, who has taken care of others' children, explained that when parents aren't involved, you can tell in their child's achievement and effort. She said, "Where the mom doesn't put [in] that effort you see it in the report card and how they act with [other kids]."

Additionally, when asked about the effect their participation had on student achievement, parents mentioned their perceptions of a direct relationship between participation and their child's tested reading level. Participants indicated that the more they participated, the higher the student's reading level, and vice versa. One focus group member expressed:

If I had not spent all that time reading with him his level wouldn't have been so high. It wasn't that he wasn't capable. But if I didn't make that important, if I didn't make that a focus, it wouldn't have happened. Because he's not, he's not – he loves math and science, but he hates to read. He was never going to read if I

didn't force that. If I didn't, you know, make that important. So I think it plays a huge part in their success.

Another participant spoke of a time when her daughters' reading level dropped significantly when she had gotten a new job. She explained, "... because when I was working six hours, she dropped her reading level due to lack of attention. I do not pay attention to [her reading level] because I work."

Finally, when asked how their participation in education had a positive impact on their child's academic achievement, focus group members discussed that more educational participation will give their child a better chance at postsecondary success and more job opportunities. One participant spoke proudly about his daughter being the first in his family who will possibly go on to college. He stated:

My daughter will be first on both sides of the family to ever go to college. I mean, to me that is amazing. Especially with me because I barely got through school. My wife was even worse. And my mom didn't finish. My mom didn't graduate. She turned out pregnant with me. She didn't want to make the same mistake. She wanted to make sure I graduated.

This parent made it clear that he perceived his mother's participation was key to his success in education. Another parent talked about her son moving from an intervention group to the gifted and talented program, which would give him a better chance of success in advanced classes, because of their working together on his improvement. She explained:

So when I found out he was on RTI [Response to Intervention], we spent that entire year. We were at the library in the afternoon. We were reading on the weekends. You know, I spent a lot of time doing that. And now he's in Pre-AP [Advance Placement] everything.

Parents in focus group meetings spoke passionately about the importance of their participation in the education of their children in impacting academic achievement. They made it clear that without their involvement, participants' children might not have seen the levels of success they are currently experiencing.

Barriers to Parent Participation in Education

Focus group participants perceived a great variety of barriers to their participation in education. The main issue the parents discussed as being a barrier to participation was the language barrier some of them experienced in communication with the school, whether in writing or oral communications. Of the focus group participants, six (50.0%) came from a home where Spanish was the predominant language. With English Learners composing almost 30% of the population of the district, there is a need for the schools to offer communication in Spanish. When speaking of the call-outs and messaging they receive from the school, some of the parents claimed that the only available language of communication is English. One participant said:

At our campus and even at the district level we have, we have the office people that speak Spanish. Yet the call-outs are made only in English. You speak Spanish. Why not say snip-it in English and snip-it in Spanish? We have a district. When they make call-outs, they're all in English.

Furthermore, some Spanish-speaking parents discussed their perceptions of the negative reactions of the office personnel when they visit the school. One focus group member stated, "It's kind of rude when you have, when you're looking at somebody and they're like, 'God, they only speak Spanish. Now I gotta [sic] get somebody that speaks Spanish.'" Another parent clearly claimed that the language barrier was the main barrier to her participation by saying, "It is the language, but I try. And yes I can make myself to be understood. I make myself to be understood." However, with regard to the language

barrier, some of the parents agreed that the school does make an effort to bridge that gap, especially when required by law. One focus group participant expressed:

But always, there is always someone that helps you to translate. If you do not feel comfortable; like, I go every year to the ARD [Admission, Review, and Dismissal] with my child and they ask me if I need a translator or something and there is always someone who asks you at the schools.

The quotations above clearly implicate language as the main barrier many participants felt was to blame for lack of parent participation in education. The Spanish-speaking focus group members have felt this barrier in several aspects of the educational system, including campus/district call-outs and after-school events. However, where the law is concerned, the needs of multilingual parents are more often being met.

Research Question Eight

Research question eight, *What are parent perceptions regarding their participation in academic community outreach events and its effect on student emotional well-being and student achievement?*, was answered by using a qualitative inductive coding process. In an effort to gain a greater understanding of parents' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of academic community outreach events in increasing student achievement, 12 parents participated in focus groups concerning the issue. The emergent themes and subthemes obtained from parents' responses are provided below, including samples of the respondents' comments.

Parent Opinions About Academic Community Outreach Events

Focus group participants had varying opinions about academic community outreach events held at their children's schools. Some of the opinions were positive and some were negative, mostly based on the type and style of the events held. The majority

of the opinions parents held were upbeat and excited. When speaking of a math night held at her child's school, one parent explained how much she liked the idea of the event:

What we did was, on math night we all sat in. And it was a full house, which we were shocked ... And us as parents had to do the problem. And when we were stuck, they [the students] showed us how to do it. Like [our daughter] showed us, 'No mom, you're doing it wrong. You need this times this equals this.' And that was cool. So we were able to do a lot of problems like that. And [the teachers] were like, 'Yes, this is what your kids have to know in order to pass the STAAR. This is why it is so important that they are here every day. That, you know, you're not checking them out early all the time.'

When speaking of their school's math night, another focus group participant spoke similarly, mentioning the role of the students as tutors in helping the parents understand the mathematics concepts they were demonstrating:

I loved ours. Ours was really good. It was very ... we interacted a lot. And we were actually able to see what the kids were saying when they were taking the STAAR; and how much pressure they were under. Because they even timed us on some stuff, which was kind of cute. We kind of liked that. They were like, 'Hurry Mom!' I'm like, 'I don't know what I'm doing [laughing]!'

Another respondent spoke fondly about her child's family reading night, especially noting the cooperation between the school, students, and parents in getting the children excited about reading:

So for reading night, the kids were able to go with their parents and choose books. And then the parents went with them to the computer lab and took the test. And so they were able to – they earn points during the school day, but they were also

able to earn points on reading night. And then they can use their points for, you know, I think different teachers do different things with their points.

However, some parents did have negative opinions about academic community outreach events. While parents agreed that math, reading, and science nights are engaging and fun, they also agreed that STAAR nights are less engaging or boring. One parent simply stated, “Um, STAAR night was boring,” while other parents in the focus group laughed and agreed. Another parent admitted, “It’s hard to make STAAR night fun because STAAR is not fun.”

Focus group members shared varying opinions about academic community outreach events at their children’s school. They conveyed that the interactive events were upbeat and exciting, in that there were a lot of hands-on activities in which the parents and students could participate together. However, they also shared that the events that focused on the STAAR test were less appealing and duller. Participants made it clear that they felt the school offered varying events in which they could participate, and they perceived that some of the events offered more benefits to the students than others.

Parent Participation in Academic Community Outreach Events Effect

Emotional effect. Focus group participants were excited to discuss their perceptions of the emotional effect that their participation in academic community outreach events had on their children. Many even discussed how they felt the events helped build relationships between parent and child, between parent and teacher, and between teacher and student. One participant described their experience at community outreach events:

I definitely found value in them. I thought it was, I mean, it was a great way to get parents involved. The way to make the kids have a little more fun with, you know, educational stuff. Because sometimes I think we get so bogged down in

the academics that we don't ... have time so much to make it fun. And so having events like that is a way to show that ... education can be fun, and to get all the parents involved too. I thought it was great. It gives us an opportunity to build relationships [between] the parent, teacher, and the student. And we get to interact with each other. And you get to meet other parents also.

When speaking of academic community outreach events, another participant admitted, "I think it's good for the kids to see their teachers outside of the school day, you know? They see them in kind of a different role." Additionally, one parent stated that it was good for the students to interact within their community: "The other thing is that it helps the kids to interact with different people besides their classroom students. At least [our children] get to know other students as well."

Academic effect. Parents overwhelmingly agreed that participation in academic community outreach events had a positive influence on their child's academic success. Many parents felt that attending just helped them to know more about their child's academic performance in general. When asked if he felt attending these events had an academic effect on his child, one respondent stated, "Yes, because he would know that if something is wrong with him, we are attentive to them [the teachers] and we will get to know. So, he has to go very straight. If not, he will face the consequences." This pointed out that the parent intends to use the presence of the teacher as leverage to get the student to perform. Another parent agreed, "And that is what we take from those [outreach events]. We see the teacher and I ask her about how he is doing. I would ask the teacher, 'What is he struggling with?' so I could get more information."

Additionally, another focus group member agreed that parent participation in academic community outreach events does indeed positively influence students' academic performance. She explained:

I definitely think it does. Because I think it goes back to, again, showing your child the value of education.... If I can't make time to come to some of your after school activities that are related to your education, then what makes you think that I'm going to be involved in your daily education?

Parents in focus groups indicated that they felt academic community outreach events had benefits to their children in both emotional and academic ways. Emotionally, participants shared that they felt these events showed the students that education can be fun, and they helped the children see value in academic activities, especially since the parents themselves were involved. Additionally, parents felt that participation in outreach events helped students to build relationships with all involved, including parents and school staff, and helped students to see their own teachers in a new light. Academically, focus group participants felt these events helped create a more open line of communication with teachers in order to foster better academic performance in their child. Furthermore, parent involvement in after-school events illustrated to their children the importance of taking time out for education, thus nurturing the significance of student effort.

Barriers to Participation in Academic Community Outreach Events

Just as in generic parent participation discussed in the previous section, focus group members felt that language and cultural obstacles are the greatest barrier to participation in academic community outreach events. When speaking of his son, one participant related how language differences get in the way of his participation in events at the school: "But he [his son] says, 'Why? Why are you going? Why are you going to go if they do not speak Spanish to you; they speak to you in English.'" Additionally, the same respondent remarked, "That is why I did not want to come; because I do not

understand English at all.” Similarly, when speaking about the language barriers at after-school events at her child’s school, another parent stated:

We have so many Hispanics that speak nothing but Spanish. But for some strange reason, even though our school is, you know, pretty much Hispanics work there; we don’t utilize that very much. We still don’t. I feel we don’t welcome the Hispanic parents more.

Cultural differences were also mentioned when discussing language barriers to participation in academic community outreach events. One participant discussed not feeling welcome at after-school events due to cultural differences: “Whether or not we’re involved [doesn’t matter] as much. So, that’s an issue with this district. We have a lot of cultural issues where parents don’t feel like they have the right to be, you know, involved.”

Furthermore, parents indicated that family structure is also a barrier to this type of participation. One focus group member indicated, “But some of these kids from our campus come from like really broken homes.” She discussed the possibility that this may be part of the reason for low participation at academic community outreach events. The group expanded on this point to make it clear that single-parent households largely consist of one parent working many hours or multiple jobs just to make ends meet. Participants discussed that, even though single parents might want to participate in after-school events, they simply might not be able to attend.

Another barrier to parent participation in academic community outreach events discussed by focus group participants involved lack of timely notice from the school regarding the outreach events. While the schools in the current study use a variety of methods to reach out to parents regarding academic community outreach events – including fliers, emails, call-outs, and letters – parents still indicated this as a barrier to

their participation. One reason indicated for this lack of notice is simply due to the possibility that the students may not want their parents attending the events. One participant explained, “I believe sometimes the kids feel embarrassed if we go with them.” When speaking of conversations had with other parents, another respondent related:

Even we were encouraging others to go with us [to the event]. ‘Come on, let’s go.’ ‘And where are you going?’ they asked and looked at us ... ‘We are going to the meeting!’ ‘What meeting?’ they asked. They didn’t even know about it.

This quote indicates that there may be a lack of communication between the school and the parents regarding notice about the event details as well. Likewise, another focus group member simply explained her willingness to attend any event she knew of in advance, but many times she had no advance notice from the school. She simply cited that it was “a lack of communication.”

Finally, parents in the focus groups maintained that busy work schedules made it difficult to attend academic community outreach events at their child’s school. The schools included in this study normally hold their events on weeknights, beginning no earlier than 5:00 P.M. and lasting no later than 8:00 P.M. One parent stated, “At least either the mom or the dad [should attend], because it is understandable that the dad is working, right?” Another respondent agreed: when speaking of her husband, she said, “He is working and gets home late.” One father remarked, “My work schedule sometimes ... interferes with the times ... of when the events are. That’s the main one that I could say the barriers have been.” Overall, most of the parents agreed that work schedules conflicted with attendance at academic community outreach events.

Regarding barriers to parent participation in academic community outreach events, focus group participants’ feelings varied. Most predominant, as with participation

in general, was the language barrier. However, they also noted other barriers such as family structure, lack of communication from the school, and work schedules as being a hindrance to their participation in after-school events. Overall, not only do barriers to these events exist, but participants indicated the need to close these gaps in order to increase participation in academic community outreach events.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the results of the quantitative and qualitative data analysis of this study. In the next chapter, this study's findings will be compared and contrasted with prior studies documented in the research literature. Additionally, the implications of this study's results will be discussed with consideration toward the influence of parent participation, especially in community outreach events on fifth-grade student achievement in science. Avenues for future research will also be specified.

CHAPTER V:

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this research study was to examine the dynamics between parent participation and fifth-grade student achievement. Studies examining the relationship between parent participation and student achievement have found varying significance (Araque et al., 2017; Fernandez-Alonzo et al., 2017; Johnson & Hull, 2014; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Loughlin-Presnal & Bierman, 2017; Mayo & Siraj, 2015; Smith, 2006; Theodorou, 2008), but not many have delved into the relationships between specific aspects of parent participation and achievement on standardized tests. Furthermore, few studies have specifically examined parent perceptions regarding their own participation in education and in academic community outreach events on their child's achievement.

To quantify parent participation in education, 153 parents of fifth-grade students who were enrolled in a large school district in southeast Texas completed the *Parents and School Survey* (PASS). Additionally, parent participation in academic community outreach events within the sample was documented from archived sign-in sheets, and a matched sample was randomly created in order to compare student achievement of parents who did attend those events and those who did not. Finally, 12 parents participated in focus group sessions in order to enrich the understanding of perceptions and attitudes regarding their participation in education and in academic community outreach events, and whether parent participation had an impact on achievement. Within this chapter, the findings of this study are contextualized in the larger body of research literature. Implications for district administrators, school administrators, teachers, and district policy as well as recommendations for future research are also included.

Summary

Research Question One

Findings from this study indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between parent academic assistance at home and mathematics, reading, science, and overall student achievement. These findings are in agreement with Araque et al. (2017), who found that higher levels of parent academic assistance at home resulted in higher achievement in science, language arts, and mathematics. Furthermore, this study's findings concur with Lee and Bowen (2006) and Mayo and Siraj (2015), who found that higher levels of parent concentration on creating a home environment that is conducive to studying and placing importance on education had a direct influence on those students' achievement. The work of Van Voorhis (2011) further supports the findings of the current study in that more parent participation in homework and other school-themed activities at home results in higher student homework completion and significantly higher academic performance in mathematics. On the other hand, Fernandez-Alonzo et al. (2017) suggest that more controlling parents do not support higher student achievement. One of the reasons for the discrepancy in the data between the two studies is that Fernandez-Alonzo et al. used student-perceived measures to describe the level of parent involvement while the current study used parent perceptions.

Research Question Two

Findings from this study indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between parent/school communication and mathematics, reading, science, and overall student achievement. These findings are in agreement with Araque et al. (2017), who found that higher levels of parent/school communication resulted in higher achievement in science, language arts, and mathematics. Additionally, the findings from this study were similar to those from O'Donnell and Kirkner (2014) in that parent/school

communication was proven to have a positive relationship with student achievement in English language arts standardized tests. However, the same study found no relationship between parent/school communication and mathematics standardized test scores. Furthermore, Sheldon et al. (2010) also found that communication between schools and families had a positive relationship with student achievement in mathematics, which is in agreement with the findings of this study. Conversely, Fernandez-Alonzo et al. (2017) suggest that less communicative parents tend to have students with higher achievement. One of the reasons for the discrepancy in the data between the two studies is that Fernandez-Alonzo et al. used student-perceived measures to describe the level of parent involvement while the current study used parent perceptions. The findings of Johnson and Hull (2014) also dispute the findings of this study by declaring there is no connection between parent/school communication and student achievement in science. While this study only measures the connection between parent involvement and science scores, another reason for the inconsistency could be that Johnson and Hull measured academic growth in science over time and the current study only measures the current year.

Research Question Three

Findings from this study indicate that there is not a statistically significant relationship between parent volunteering at school and student achievement. These findings concur with those of Johnson and Hull (2014), who also found that there is no significant relationship between parent volunteering at school and student achievement. At the same time, O'Donnell and Kirkner (2014) had varying similarities and differences to the findings of the current study, in that parent volunteering at school was found to have an impact on English language arts standardized test scores, but not on mathematics standardized test scores. One of the reasons for the disparity in findings is that O'Donnell and Kirkner (2014) were measuring the direct effects of a parental

involvement program which was intended to increase parent participation in multiple areas, and the current study measured parent-perceived levels of involvement in general.

Research Question Four

Findings from this study indicate that there is not a statistically significant relationship between parent educational decision-making and student achievement. This was in stark contrast to all the literature reviewed for this study. First of all, Araque et al. (2017) found that when parents develop future educational interests in their children and help their children make good postsecondary and career decisions that student achievement in language arts, mathematics, and science increased. One of the reasons for this discrepancy is that Araque et al. focused on year-to-year comparisons while the current study focused on only one grade level and one year's achievement. An equally important difference, Lee and Bowen (2006) contrasted with the current study's findings in that a significant relationship was found between parents discussing educational aspirations with their children and student achievement. Lee and Bowen focused mainly on the differences in participation across ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and parent level of achievement, while the current study focused on parent participation across all those variables. Similarly, another study that contrasted with the current study is Loughlin-Presnal and Bierman (2017), which found that parental expectations and educational decision-making had a significant impact on second- and third-grade student achievement. Loughlin-Presnal and Bierman (2017) is a longitudinal study that followed students over grades one, two, three, and five, whereas the current study focused on only one year of the participants' academic career.

Research Question Five

Findings from this study indicate that there is not a statistically significant relationship between parent/community collaboration and student achievement. None of the literature reviewed for this study concurred with this finding. Kirby and DiPaola (2011) found that when families and communities are engaged with the school, higher student achievement is predicted. These findings were drawn by collecting from a much larger sample across a much broader area. This may be one of the reasons for the contrast in findings. Furthermore, Kirby and DiPaola relied on the responses of educational faculty and staff rather than parent self-perceived notions of parent/community collaboration. Sheldon et al. (2010) also had findings that differed from the current study which uncovered that parent/community collaboration directly impacted student achievement. This study differs from the current study in that schools were asked to identify ways in which they fostered collaboration between families, the community, and the school, whereas the current study focused on parents' perceptions of their own participation.

Research Question Six

Findings from this study indicate that parent participation in academic community outreach events had an influence on fifth-grade science and overall achievement, but not reading and mathematics achievement. Bottoms et al. (2017) was partially in agreement with the findings of this study in that parent and teacher participation in academic community outreach events was found to improve students' overall improvement in both science and math; reading was not tested. However, Bottoms et al. used teacher perceptions as a measure instead of parent perceptions as in the current study. Also in limited agreement, Araque et al. (2017) found a significant increase across all subject areas when parents participated in community outreach events. Converse to the findings

of this study, Sheldon et al. (2010) found schools that had higher participation in mathematics family events predicted higher mathematics achievement. The schools surveyed reported that 27 out of the 39 participant sites reported holding a family math night in an effort to bolster their student mathematics scores on standardized tests. This is similar to the current study in that a connection was found between participation in academic community outreach events, but different in that a connection was found in mathematics instead of science.

Research Question Seven

Research question seven, which examined parent perceptions regarding their own various facets of participation in education and its effect on student emotional well-being and student achievement, was answered using an inductive thematic coding process based on two focus group sessions with 12 parents of students who took the 2018 fifth-grade STAAR tests. Responses were organized into six major themes: (1) value parents place on education, (2) reasons to be involved, (3) types of participation, (4) partnerships with educators, (5) parent participation effect, and (6) barriers to parent participation.

Focus group members spoke about how important it is for parents to place value on education in general. Participants agreed that if parents just show their children that they think education is important, then their children will experience higher academic achievement, a chance at an education beyond high school, a better job, and therefore a more successful life, which is in accord with the research by Hill et al. (2018). Focus group participants agreed across the board that caring for their child in general was the primary reason they held for being involved in their education. Additionally, most of the focus group members stated that preparing their child for success in life was an important reason for participating in education, which agrees with the study by Hill et al. (2018).

Furthermore, parents agreed that their children's emotional well-being influences their willingness to be a part of the education of their child.

Regarding types of participation, academic assistance at home, parent-teacher communication, and volunteering emerged within participants' perceptions as prevalent forms of involvement. This finding is in partial agreement with Smith (2006), whose study found the three main forms of parent participation to be home-based participation, school-based participation, and parent-child educational aspirations. When asked about partnerships with educators, most participants indicated that they felt it was important for the principals, teachers, and parents to maintain relationships among themselves in order for the students to be successful in education.

Focus group members all agreed that parent participation in education had a positive impact on their children's emotional well-being and academic achievement. Specifically, parents stated that their participation in their own children's education caused increased feelings of pride, enthusiasm, determination, and aptitude in their children. Furthermore, some participants related that parent involvement makes students feel more safe and secure because someone is present to watch out for them. Regarding academic achievement, parents in focus groups discussed that they felt their participation in the education of their child related directly to higher report card scores, higher reading levels, and more advanced scores on standardized tests, concurring with Hill et al. (2018).

In addition, focus group participants discussed barriers to their participation in education. The main barrier that emerged was that of an obstacle to communication between parents and teachers, and between parents and school/administration caused by language differences. While language accommodations weren't always an issue, parents agreed that more attention needs to be paid to close that gap. This finding is in agreement

with Hill et al. (2018) and Theodorou (2008), whose studies found that oftentimes language and cultural barriers make parents feel isolated from the school environment.

Research Question Eight

Research question eight, which examined parent perceptions regarding their participation in academic community outreach events and its effect on student emotional well-being and student achievement, was answered using an inductive thematic coding process based on two focus group sessions with 12 parents of students who took the 2018 fifth-grade STAAR tests. Responses were organized into three major themes: (1) parent opinions about academic community outreach events, (2) parent participation in academic community outreach events effect, and (3) barriers to participation in academic community outreach events.

When speaking of academic community outreach events, focus group members expressed that they enjoyed the events, especially the ones that involved hands-on experiences and activities. They found the events to be upbeat and exciting. Additionally, they enjoyed watching their children move into the role of tutor, imparting information for the parents to learn. These findings are in agreement with Yanowitz and Hahs-Vaughn (2016), who found that parents who participated in these types of events had a positive experience and would be likely to participate again. Conversely, participants from this study described other events that did not have tactile learning experiences, such as STAAR nights, as less engaging and dull.

Study participants spoke confidently about the positive emotional and academic effects they perceived in their children due to their participation in academic community outreach events. They agreed that having fun with their child in an academic setting helped to build a stronger relationship between parent and child, a concept that concurs with the research by Yanowitz and Hahs-Vaughn (2016). Furthermore, some focus group

members indicated how important they felt it was for their children to interact with multiple people in conversation and critical thinking. Academically, participants shared their perception that participation in these events significantly improved student achievement due to increased face-to-face communication with teachers and administrators regarding their child's progress. Valadez and Moineau (2010) similarly found that collaboration between school staff and parents contributed to increased student performance. Additionally, in accord with Mayo and Siraj (2015), focus group members revealed that, by putting emphasis on education in attending academic community outreach events, parents set a positive example for their children, thus increasing the likelihood of higher academic performance.

When discussing barriers to their participation in academic community outreach events, multiple issues were brought up by participants. Similar to research question seven, language barriers were listed as a major barrier to participation in these events. Furthermore, cultural differences were perceived by focus group members as being another obstacle to parent participation in academic community outreach events. Language and cultural difference were also cited as barriers to participation in after-school events in the study by Theodorou (2008), who found that these metaphorical walls made the parents feel disconnected from the school as a whole. Participants also mentioned that busy work schedules might impair parents' attendance at these events. This concept was in agreement with Smith (2006), who found that some parents are so consumed with daily responsibilities that they are often unable to concentrate on supporting the education of their children. Focus group participants also identified lack of communication from the school as a barrier to their participation in academic community outreach events. They stated that detailed notice of the after-school events

often never reached them, whether it was because no such information was given out or their own child neglected to give it to them.

Implications

As a result of this study's examination of the dynamics between parent participation in education and student achievement, implications for administrators, teachers, and district/campus policy emerged. For administrators, this study revealed the need to provide more culturally relevant opportunities for parents and their children to engage with school faculty and staff on a regular basis. Furthermore, administrators must have a clear plan in place for expectations for parent-teacher and parent-school communication. For teachers, this study made clear that parent academic assistance at home should be a clear priority. Therefore, teachers must create and plan innovative ways to involve parents and family members in home educational practices. Teachers must also recognize and respect the cultural differences that exist between them and their students, and use this understanding as a tool to build relationships. Finally, for district policy, this study makes it clear that there must be a parent involvement plan in place that addresses all the constructs of this study, including the need for academic community outreach events on every campus and across grade levels.

Implications for Administrators

This plan clearly starts with administrators. Policies and procedures regarding bolstering parent participation can be created, written, and sent out from central administration offices all over the country to their campuses, but changes in culture must start with campus leadership. Depending on district policies, campus principals should endeavor to come up with a specific list and schedule for culturally relevant interactions between parents, their children, and school faculty/staff. Examples for these interactions could include the usual events seen at schools, such as meet-the-teacher, open house, and

family academic nights. Events could be organized to help the parents themselves, as well. However, to make these events more culturally relevant, attention needs to be paid to the exact demographics of the student population in order to meet the needs of those children and their families. For instance, parents with low socioeconomic status might have different specific needs than those from a higher socioeconomic status; African American parents may have different needs than Hispanic ones.

Additionally, since communication between the parent and the school was shown to have a significant relationship with student achievement in all areas, administrators should have patterns of communication in place for teachers and the school to practice when reaching out to parents. Patterns of communication for teachers should include how often the teacher should be expected to communicate with parents, whether it be written, by phone, or face-to-face communication. Teachers should be made aware that positive phone calls to parents can have an even greater effect on a student's progress than a negative one. As an administrator, expectations for documentation of parent-teacher communication should be set and followed up on. As far as patterns of communication between the school and parents is concerned, much attention needs to be paid. The teacher is not the only stakeholder who is responsible for keeping the lines of communication open. Schools should regularly be in contact with parents, whether it be via mail-out, call-out, newsletter, email, website, or notice carried home by the student. Timelines for this communication should be laid out by the administrator and documented regularly. Most importantly, efforts must be made by administrators, teachers, and school staff to accommodate for all languages spoken by families whose children attend the school.

Overall, administrators should not abandon practices that strive to involve parents, even if obvious success is not seen at once. Reaching out to meet the needs of their

students should be a daily priority, and from there comes the prerequisite of meeting the needs of parents. But rewards of that labor do not always come quickly or easily, and administrators must find the means of facilitating parent participation that work the best for their population and be persistent and consistent in those methods over time.

Implications for Teachers

While the current study did not find a significant connection between all areas of parent participation in education and student achievement, it did find a strong relationship between parent academic assistance at home and student achievement in mathematics, reading, and science. It is therefore critical for teachers, in their lessons, to constantly strive to build ways for parents to participate in the education of their students at home. Whether built in as part of the curriculum itself or designed by the teacher, communication opportunities between parent and child as a part of homework are a powerful tool to facilitate parent academic assistance at home. This communication between parent and child not only gives the parent the influence to improve his or her child's achievement, but it also facilitates a deeper bond between the two. Teachers should think of the parent as a tool to foster student academic independence – a sort of bridge in the gap of student learning. Even if the parent is not proficient in the content of the homework, partnership between the parent and child can be a powerful stimulus to increase the student's desire and capability to master the content.

Furthermore, teachers should take upon themselves the responsibility of being more culturally aware of the students placed in their charge. Teachers should start off each school year by showing each student that they are interested in their ethnic and cultural backgrounds by having conversations with the class as a whole and bringing attention to each student's background. When interacting with other students or with the teacher, students' behavior in the classroom will differ based on their culture. Teachers

must be aware of these differences in order to implement culturally responsive pedagogical practices. Planning for cultural differences in students will ensure a higher rate of success in the classroom. Additionally, teachers should make an effort to get to know the families of their students. Letting students' families know that they are valued in the education of their children is a powerful weapon for teachers, as family members can be great allies to the teacher.

Implications for District Policy

Although the current study was limited to one school year, findings did show that parent participation in academic community outreach events influenced science achievement, while it did not influence reading and mathematics achievement. It is possible that repeated parent participation in subject-and grade-level-aligned academic community outreach events might influence overall student achievement. Therefore, it is recommended that school districts put parent participation policies in place that address the constructs of the current study, including the need for academic community outreach events on every campus and across grade levels. In order to establish consistent parent participation practices, a central administration team should be created with the purpose of aligning campus parent participation plans. One of the goals of this team should be to create a list of academic community outreach events that campuses are required to have throughout the course of a school year. The required academic community outreach events should be well planned in advance, with clear goals and culturally relevant activities developed to achieve those goals. Events should take into account the language needs of the population of each campus by providing translators and documents in applicable languages. Once consistency has been aligned across the district, results could reflect the influence of parent participation in academic community outreach events on all subjects.

Recommendations for Future Research

Findings from this study resulted from obtaining perceptions from parents and guardians, both quantitative and qualitative, and collecting archived data from the school district regarding their children's achievement. Although this study provided abundant information about this topic, recommendations for future research will help to expand knowledge about the dynamics between parent participation and student achievement. The following recommendations are based on data and results from this study.

In terms of expanding the scope of this study, future research should include multiple grade levels testing the same constructs. The current study focuses only on the dynamics between parent participation and fifth-grade achievement. Standardized test scores would still be available for third through fifth grades, but there are measures for achievement in grades below third, and so third grade would not have to be the lower limit of study. Kindergarten through second grades have progress measures such as reading records and diagnostic mathematics assessments, which would also be considered archived data. Future research might explore how parent participation varies between grade levels and how participation, in its various forms, might impact student achievement across grade levels.

In order to increase the depth of the current study, a longitudinal study could be conducted to follow the students over time. Short-term measurements do not necessarily equate to long-term measurements, and that could be the reason for the lack of significant findings in the present study. The current study was limited in terms of time and scope, and therefore might not have been as revealing as one that follows a district over a longer time span, as most of the existing research suggests (Johnson & Hull, 2014; Loughlin-Presnal & Bierman, 2017). A longitudinal study in the current study's district would be quite telling and could shed more definitive light on the dynamics between parent

participation and student achievement. For example, does parent participation differ between elementary and middle school, and between middle school and high school for the same students? By conducting a longitudinal study, not only could the researcher see the differences in parent participation over time in a particular group of students' educational careers, the researcher could also examine whether the presence of parent participation continues to impact achievement over time.

Additionally, when discussing academic community outreach events, more research must be done in terms of connecting specific subject-level and grade-level parental involvement events with detailed achievement measures. The current study measured the influence of parent participation in academic community outreach events in general on student achievement in all subjects. Now that influence has been found, further research could be more focused in its intent. For example, in districts where the same academic community outreach events are held at all elementary campuses, research could be done across campuses on the influence of parent participation at all the mathematics community outreach events and student achievement in mathematics in third through fifth grades. The same protocol could be followed for science and reading. The assumption could be made that, in the case of this study, the science events were simply more engaging or better attended. However, until more focused longitudinal research is conducted, the results will not be known.

Conclusion

The dynamics between parent participation and student achievement have been well researched. For the most part, more parent participation in education has been shown to lead to higher overall student achievement (Araque et al., 2017; Kirby & DiPaola, 2011; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Loughlin-Presnal & Bierman, 2017; Mayo & Siraj, 2015; Sheldon et al., 2010; Smith, 2006; Theodorou, 2008; Van Voorhis, 2011). Given

that student academic success is necessary for the U.S. to remain competitive in the global economy (Mayo & Siraj, 2015), it is essential that public education stakeholders design and implement additional parent participation opportunities in education at the top of the list of priorities. Creating more hands-on and interest-provoking ways for parents to be involved in the education of their children is vital for increasing parent participation in education. This limited study could potentially provide insight on the importance of parent participation in education and its relationship to student achievement, but more longitudinal and focused research would have to be done to know the true impact parent participation has on student achievement. Future findings are likely to suggest that school districts discern a path for creative ways to enhance parent participation, and thus increase student achievement, as this provides opportunities for students to have stronger chances for successful lives.

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APPENDIX A:
SURVEY COVER LETTER



University
of Houston
Clear Lake

August 2018

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Greetings! You are being solicited to complete the *Parent and School Survey* (PASS). The purpose of this questionnaire is to examine the frequency and means of parent participation in schools. The data obtained from this study will allow the University of Houston-Clear Lake to better understand the influence parent participation has on student achievement.

Please try to answer all the questions. Filling out the attached survey is entirely voluntary, but answering each response will make the survey most useful. This instrument will take just a few minutes to complete and all of your responses will be kept completely confidential. **No one** but the researcher will have access to the information you submit at any time. No obvious undue risks will be endured and you may stop your participation at any time. In addition, you will also not benefit directly from your participation in the study.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated and your willingness to participate in this study is implied if you proceed with completing the survey. Your completion of the *Parent and School Survey* (PASS) is not only greatly appreciated, but invaluable. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me with any questions. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Christine Irvin, M. Ed.
Elementary Science Coach





University
of Houston
Clear Lake

Agosto 2018

Estimado padre o tutor:

¡Saludos! Se le está solicitando completar la Encuesta para padres y escuela (PASS). El propósito de este cuestionario es examinar la frecuencia y los medios de participación de los padres en las escuelas. Los datos obtenidos de este estudio permitirán a la Universidad de Houston-Clear Lake comprender mejor la influencia que la participación de los padres tiene en el rendimiento estudiantil.

Intenta responder todas las preguntas. Completar la encuesta adjunta es completamente voluntaria, pero responder cada respuesta hará que la encuesta sea más útil. Este instrumento tardará unos minutos en completarse y todas sus respuestas serán completamente confidenciales. Nadie más que el investigador tendrá acceso a la información que envíe en cualquier momento. No se soportarán riesgos indebidos obvios y puede detener su participación en cualquier momento. Además, tampoco se beneficiará directamente de su participación en el estudio.

Su cooperación es apreciada y su voluntad de participar en este estudio está implícita si continúa con la encuesta. La finalización de la Encuesta para padres y escuela (PASS) no solo es apreciada, sino que tiene un valor incalculable. Si tiene más preguntas, no dude en ponerse en contacto conmigo si tiene alguna pregunta. ¡Gracias!

Sinceramente,

Christine Irvin, M. Ed.
Elementary Science Coach



APPENDIX B:
INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

You are being asked to participate in the research project described below. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate, or you may decide to stop your participation at any time. Should you refuse to participate in the study or should you withdraw your consent and stop participation in the study, your decision will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you may be otherwise entitled. You are being asked to read the information below carefully, and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to participate.

Title: EXPLORING PARENT PERCEPTIONS OF ACADEMIC COMMUNITY OUTREACH EVENTS IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Principal Investigator(s): Christine Irvin, M. Ed.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research is to explore parent perceptions of academic community outreach events in public elementary schools in order determine the value of the events held by parents.

PROCEDURES

You will be asked to participate in an interview in which you will answer questions about your perceptions of participation in academic community outreach events at your child's school.

EXPECTED DURATION

The total anticipated time commitment will be approximately one hour.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION

There are no anticipated risks associated with participation in this project.

BENEFITS TO THE SUBJECT

There is no direct benefit received from your participation in this study, but your participation will help the investigator(s) better understand the perceptions of parents regarding academic community outreach events.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS

Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of your study records. The data collected from the study will be used for educational and publication purposes; however, you will not be identified by name. For federal audit purposes, the participant's documentation for this research project will be maintained and safeguarded by the Researcher for a minimum of three years after completion of the study. After that time, the participant's documentation may be destroyed.

FINANCIAL COMPENSATION

There is no financial compensation to be offered for participation in the study.

INVESTIGATOR'S RIGHT TO WITHDRAW PARTICIPANT

The investigator has the right to withdraw you from this study at any time.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

If you have additional questions during the course of this study about the research or any related problem, you may contact the Researcher, Christine Irvin, at phone number 713-378-3431 or by email at christy.irvin@cvisd.org.

SIGNATURES:

Your signature below acknowledges your voluntary participation in this research project. Such participation does not release the investigator(s), institution(s), sponsor(s) or granting agency(ies) from their professional and ethical responsibility to you. By signing the form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

The purpose of this study, procedures to be followed, and explanation of risks or benefits have been explained to you. You have been allowed to ask questions and your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. You have been told who to contact if you have additional questions. You have read this consent form and voluntarily agree to participate as a subject in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent at any time by contacting the Principal Investigator. You will be given a copy of the consent form you have signed.

Subject's printed name: _____
Signature of Subject: _____
Date: _____

Using language that is understandable and appropriate, I have discussed this project and the items listed above with the subject.

Printed name and title _____
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____
Date: _____

THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON-CLEAR LAKE (UHCL) COMMITTEE FOR PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS HAS REVIEWED AND APPROVED THIS PROJECT. ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING YOUR RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT MAY BE ADDRESSED TO THE UHCL COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS (281-283-3015). ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS THAT ARE CARRIED OUT BY INVESTIGATORS AT UHCL ARE GOVERNED BY REQUIREMENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. (FEDERALWIDE ASSURANCE # FWA00004068)

FORMULARIO DE CONSENTIMIENTO

Formulario de consentimiento para participar en la investigación

Se le solicita participar en el proyecto de investigación que se describe a continuación. Su participación en este estudio es completamente voluntaria y puede negarse a participar, o puede decidir suspender su participación en cualquier momento. Si se niega a participar en el estudio o si retira su consentimiento y deja de participar en el estudio, su decisión no implicará ninguna sanción o pérdida de beneficios a los que pueda tener derecho. Se le está pidiendo a leer atentamente la siguiente información, y hacer preguntas sobre todo lo que no entienda antes de decidir si desea o no participar.

Título: EXAMINANDO LA RELACIÓN ENTRE LA PARTICIPACIÓN DE PADRES EN LA EDUCACIÓN Y EL LOGRO DEL ESTUDIANTE DE QUINTO GRADO

Investigador Principal (es): Christine Irvin, M. Ed.

Estudiante Investigador (es): Christine Irvin, M. Ed.

Patrocinador de la facultad: Brenda Weiser, Ed. D.

PROPÓSITO DEL ESTUDIO

El propósito de este estudio es examinar la relación, si existe, entre la participación de los padres y el rendimiento de los estudiantes de quinto grado.

PROCEDIMIENTOS

Se le pedirá que participe en un grupo de enfoque con el investigador en el que responderá preguntas sobre sus percepciones sobre la participación en la educación y en los programas de extensión comunitaria académica y su efecto en el rendimiento estudiantil.

DURACIÓN ESPERADA

El compromiso total de tiempo previsto será de aproximadamente una hora.

RIESGOS DE PARTICIPACIÓN

No hay riesgos anticipados asociados con la participación en este proyecto.

BENEFICIOS AL SUJETO

No hay un beneficio directo recibido de su participación en este estudio, pero su participación ayudará a los investigadores a comprender mejor la relación, si existe, entre la participación de los padres y el rendimiento de los alumnos de quinto grado.

CONFIDENCIALIDAD DE REGISTROS

Se hará todo lo posible para mantener la confidencialidad de los registros de su estudio. Los datos recopilados del estudio se utilizarán con fines educativos y de publicación; sin embargo, no se lo identificará por su nombre. Para propósitos de auditoría federal, la documentación del participante para este proyecto de investigación será mantenida y salvaguardada por el Investigador del Estudiante por un mínimo de cinco años después de la finalización del estudio. Después de ese tiempo, la documentación del participante puede ser destruida.

COMPENSACIÓN FINANCIERA

No se ofrece una compensación financiera por la participación en el estudio.

DERECHO DEL INVESTIGADOR PARA RETIRAR AL PARTICIPANTE

El investigador tiene derecho a retirarlo de este estudio en cualquier momento..

INFORMACIÓN DE CONTACTO PARA PREGUNTAS O PROBLEMAS

Si tiene preguntas adicionales durante el curso de este estudio sobre la investigación o cualquier problema relacionado, puede comunicarse con la Investigadora del estudiante, Christine Irvin, al número de teléfono 713-378-3431 o por correo electrónico a christy.irvin@cvisd.org. Se puede contactar al Patrocinador de la Facultad Brenda Weiser, Ed.D., al número de teléfono 281-283-3522 o por correo electrónico a weiser@uhcl.edu.

FIRMAS:

Su firma a continuación reconoce su participación voluntaria en este proyecto de investigación. Tal participación no libera al investigador (es), institución (es), patrocinador (es) u organismo (s) de concesión de su responsabilidad profesional y ética hacia usted. Al firmar el formulario, no está renunciando a ninguno de sus derechos legales.

El propósito de este estudio, los procedimientos a seguir y la explicación de los riesgos o beneficios le han sido explicados. Se le ha permitido hacer preguntas y sus preguntas han sido respondidas a su entera satisfacción. Le han dicho a quién contactar si tiene preguntas adicionales. Usted ha leído este formulario de consentimiento y voluntariamente acepta participar como sujeto en este estudio. Usted es libre de retirar su consentimiento en cualquier momento comunicándose con el Investigador Principal o el Investigador Estudiantil / Patrocinador de la Facultad. Se le entregará una copia del formulario de consentimiento que ha firmado.

Nombre del sujeto: _____
Firma del sujeto: _____
Fecha: _____

Utilizando un lenguaje que es comprensible y apropiado, he discutido este proyecto y los elementos enumerados anteriormente con el tema.

Nombre y título: _____
Firma de la persona que está
obteniendo el consentimiento: _____
Fecha: _____

THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON-CLEAR LAKE (UHCL) COMMITTEE FOR PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS HAS REVIEWED AND APPROVED THIS PROJECT. ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING YOUR RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT MAY BE ADDRESSED TO THE UHCL COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS (281-283-3015). ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS THAT ARE CARRIED OUT BY INVESTIGATORS AT UHCL ARE GOVERNED BY REQUIREMENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. (FEDERALWIDE ASSURANCE # FWA00004068)

APPENDIX C:
FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What level of participation would you say you have in your child's education? What makes you say that?
2. Please describe some of the ways you participate in your child's education.
3. Do you think your participation in your child's education has a significant effect on their level of achievement? In what way?
4. Did you attend any academic community outreach events at your child's school last year? If so, describe the event.
5. What was your impression of the event?
6. Do you think your participation in academic community outreach events has a significant effect on your child's level of achievement? Why or why not?
7. How do you think your children feel about your participation in their education?
8. What are some barriers to participation that you have experienced?

APPENDIX D:

SURVEY PERMISSION

7/4/2018

Parent and School Survey

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ik=b0f790c4c4&view=pt&search=all&permthid=thread-f%3A1595758694925591460&simpl=msg-f%3A15957586949...> 1/1

Parent and School Survey

2 messages

Fri, Mar 23, 2018 at 2:41 PM To:

[REDACTED]

Good afternoon Dr. Ringenberg. I am a doctoral student at the University of Houston - Clear Lake in Texas. I am doing my dissertation on the relationship between parent participation in education and student achievement. I am requesting permission to use your PASS survey in my research because it fits perfectly into my research. May I have permission to use the survey?

Thanks in advance.

Real science can be far stranger than science fiction and much more satisfying

-Stephen Hawking

ChristyIrvin,M. Ed.
Elementary Science Coach

[REDACTED]

Matthew Ringenberg [REDACTED]

Sat, Mar 24, 2018 at 7:11 PM To:

You certainly may Christy. I only ask that when you are done you send me a brief summary of the results so I have a better understanding how it is being used.

Best wishes in your endeavor

Matt Ringenberg

APPENDIX E:
FOCUS GROUP INFORMATION FORM

August, 2018

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Greetings! You are being invited to participate in focus group conversations about parent participation in education and its effect on student achievement. The data obtained from this study will allow the University of Houston-Clear Lake and the study district to better understand the perceptions of parents and guardians regarding their participation in the education of their child and its effect on academic achievement.

The focus groups will consist of up to eight members. These groups will meet once for no more than one hour at a location within the school district. If you are interested in participating in this discussion, please fill out the form below and return it to your child's school. You will hear from the researcher within a short amount of time if you are selected to participate.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated and your willingness to participate in this study is implied if you proceed with completing the form below. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Christine Irvin, M. Ed.
Elementary Science Coach



Name of Parent _____

Name of Child _____

Email Address _____

Phone Number _____

Agosto, 2018

Estimados Padres:

¡Saludos! Usted ha sido elegido(a) para participar en un grupo de enfoque sobre la participación de los padres en la educación y su efecto en los logros de los estudiantes. Los datos de este estudio ayudaran a la Universidad de Houston-Clear Lake y el distrito escolar a mejor entender la percepción de los padres con respecto a la participación en la educación de sus hijos y su efecto en los logros académicos.

Los grupos de enfoque tendrán, a lo máximo, ocho miembros. Estos grupos se reunirán una vez por menos de una hora en una localidad dentro del distrito. Si esta interesado(a) en participar en esta discusión, por favor llene el formulario abajo y regréselo a la escuela de su hijo(a). El investigador se pondrá en contacto con usted si lo(a) eligen a participar.

Su cooperación es apreciada y su complacencia a participar en el estudio esta esperado de usted si sigue a llenar el formulario abajo. Si tiene alguna otra pregunta, por favor, llámeme o envíeme un correo electrónico. ¡Gracias!

Sinceramente,

Christine Irvin, M. Ed.
Coach de las Ciencias al Nivel Primario



Nombre del Padre _____

Nombre del Estudiante _____

Correo Electronico _____

Numero Telefonico _____