A Qualitative Study Investigating High School Teachers' Perceptions of Strategies Used to Involve Hispanic ELL Parents in One School Division in Virginia

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Abstract

The number of English Language Learner (ELL) students in U.S. public schools are increasing yearly. More than 75% of ELL student's home language is Spanish. Their academic performance and graduation rates are lower than their non-ELL peers. Parent involvement contributes to student success in school, and urban leaders must examine how they involve ELL students and parents in school. The purpose of this study was to identify perceived strategies urban high school teachers use to involve ELL parents and to identify whether perceived barriers exist. School leaders can benefit from this qualitative study to address the achievement gap between ELL and non-ELL students. Five ESL teachers, six content teachers, and three Graduation Coaches participated in three focus group interviews.

Seven findings arose from the interviews. A few findings include 71% (10 out of 14) of participants perceived that all educators in the building are responsible for ELL students, 93% (13 out of 14) of participants perceived there are practices and policies established to aid teachers with communicating and involving ELL parents, and 80% percent (4 out of 5) of ESL teachers interviewed believed parents are more trusting of the school when schools partner with other community agencies to host events. Teachers perceived barriers exist that inhibit them from involving and communicating with parents. Ninety-three percent (13 out of 14) of participants noted time as a barrier. Almost 43% (6 out of 14) participants noted parents being unaware of their rights as a barrier.

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General Audience Abstract

Hispanic English Language Learners (ELL) are the fastest-growing group of students in U.S. public schools. There is an achievement gap between ELL students and non-ELL students. The graduation rates and academic performance of ELL students are lower than non-ELL students. Parent involvement is one factor that increases students' academic performance. The research in this study explored the impact and perception of parent involvement. The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify perceived strategies urban school teachers use to involve ELL parents and whether teachers perceive the strategies are effective. Content Teachers, Graduation Coaches, and ESL teachers from two high schools within one eastern Virginia school division participated in focus group interviews. The study indicated seven findings to eight implications. A recommendation for future studies is to explore and examine the practices of more diverse areas of Virginia and the impact of ELL parent involvement.

Dedication

I give all the praise to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for allowing me to achieve this milestone. I am inspired most by Philippian 4:13; I can do all things through Christ, which strengthens me.

This dissertation study is dedicated to my family, especially my daddy, Jerome Jacobs. While your time here on earth expired before I could complete my dissertation, the values I learned from you will always live inside me. You have encouraged me in your way throughout this journey. Thank you for being my quiet cheerleader. I know you are smiling from above.

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To my mama, Marguerita Jacobs, you have inspired me to continue excelling in education. As a little girl, I quietly watched you studying long hours to become a Registered Nurse, and you are the foundation for it all.

To my sister, Felicia, and my brother-in-law, Reggie, thank you for being my sounding board and ears to listen. Felicia, you encouraged me to stay on track and reminded me of taking on too many projects.

To one of my dearest friends, Stacie, the love of education brought us together over 20 years ago. You have always encouraged my professional growth as an educator and have been my true friend. For this, I say thank you. I will always cherish you and our friendship.

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The bond I formed with my cohort is indescribable. We started this journey over the Pandemic and have proven we can make it through anything. I know the people in my cohort are a phone call or text away. To Irene Winchester, thank you for reaching out to me initially and "making me your partner." You have always been a voice of reason that helped us reach the next step. We have laughed together, studied together, and written together. To Alice Graham, you are the glue that kept the cohort together. I am truly blessed to have met you. Keep progressing and remember your purpose.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Chapter One: Introduction

English Language Learner (ELL) students are the fastest-growing subgroup of students in the United States (Li & Peters, 2020). In 2019, the percentage of ELL students in public schools was higher for schools in urban areas than those in less urbanized locales. Spanish is the home language in the United States for 75.9% of all ELL students and 7.9% of all public-school students (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2020). In seven years, the number of Spanish-speaking ELL students increased by 191,665 students. By 2050, the Hispanic subgroup will represent 60% of the nation's population growth from 2005 (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.-e). Yet, ELL students' academic performance and graduation rates are lower than their counterparts (Cook et al., 2012).

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) indicated that the number of students in yearly graduating cohort classes who identified as Hispanic increased by 3,530 from 2016 to 2020 (Jones, 2021). At the same time, the dropout rate for Hispanic students was over 30%. In 2022, the graduation rate for Hispanic ELL students in Virginia was 70%, and 77% for ELL students overall (VDOE, 2022). Parents participating in meaningful ways with their student's learning can help close the achievement gap among different racial groups (Simpson, 2018; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). A positive relationship between students' academic success and the rate at which parents involve themselves in their student's learning has been identified in research (Helo-Treviño, 2016).

Historical Background

The importance of parental involvement in education has evolved since the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA; Mizell, 1980). The ESEA was passed and signed into law

in 1965. The ESEA signaled the federal government's commitment to ensuring the quality and equitability of schools by providing additional resources for vulnerable students. Since the original public law did not include a parent engagement component, in 1966, federal policymakers began encouraging school officials to involve parents. In 1967, the U.S. Office of Education mandated school officials incorporate "appropriate activities or services" to involve parents (Mizell, 1980, p. 2). In 1968, the U.S. Department of Education expanded the language to define parent involvement as "the capabilities of the parents to work with the school in a way that supports their children's well-being, growth, and development" (Mizell, 1980, p. 4). In 1974, lawmakers amended Title I to promote an increase in parent involvement in which district leaders had to create parent advisory councils at the district and school levels. The 1978 Amendments to ESEA established more comprehensive guidance for school districts by supplying parents with school information in their native language (Redding et al., 2011). Moreover, Public Law 95-96 enabled educational agencies to receive funds by establishing an advisory council for the entire school district. This law required specific stipulations, such as the majority of the members must be parents of students serviced by the school district (Education Amendments of 1978, 1978).

In 1981 under the leadership of former President Ronald Reagan, Public Law 97-35, the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (ECIA; 1981) was enacted. The ECIA was a reauthorization of ESEA. Under ECIA (1981), Title I was renamed Chapter I. The ECIA deregulated education in the United States and placed responsibilities on the states. This legislation reflected the administration's belief that each state or local jurisdiction should control its resources (Redding et al., 2011). The ECIA required schools to communicate with families.

The new legislation had a minimal requirement for schools and districts to hold a parent meeting once a school year, notifying parents of the Title I program at the school.

The Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 was also a reauthorization of ESEA. Signed by President Bill Clinton, IASA expanded the parental involvement provisions established in Title I Section 1118 to mandate that school districts receiving over $500,000 in Title I funds spend at least 1% of their budget on activities that involve families (Redding et al., 2011). Title I emphasizes deeper family-school and community-school partnerships (*U.S. Department of Education: Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, 1995). The law required school districts to collaborate with parents to develop a school-parent compact that outlined schools' and parents' roles and responsibilities in meeting students' academic needs (Redding et al., 2011).

In 2001, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act reauthorized the ESEA of 1965 once again. The NCLB acknowledged parent involvement as a critical component of schools and provided options for parents to select other schools, such as magnet and charter schools (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.-d). The NCLB mandated that schools share specific information about students' progress. This information included students' progress in reading, mathematics, science, and performance on state assessments. For the first time in history, the Department of Education defined parental involvement (Redding et al., 2011). The NCLB required school districts to establish and record parental involvement policies and programs to promote effective parent and school relationships. The NCLB abolished the Bilingual Act and incorporated some components in Title III, English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement (Menken, 2010). The passing of NCLB impacted how ELL students experienced

education and their educational achievements. The NCLB called for annual growth measures in subgroups, including ELL students (Robinson-Cimpian et al., 2016).

In 2015, President Barack Obama signed The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; 2015), which replaced NCLB. The ESSA offers a renewed focus on evidence of effectiveness (Callahan & Shifrer, 2016) and requires state and local leaders to use evidence-based interventions to address disparities in learning between subgroups of students. Under ESSA, leaders could adopt local measures as learning indicators for all students. For ELL students enrolled in high school, this meant they now had access to rigorous college preparatory coursework (Callahan & Hopkins, 2017). The ESSA defined parental involvement as:

> The participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring (a) that parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning; (b) that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school; and (c) that parents are full partners in their child's education and are included as appropriate, in decision making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child. (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.-f, p. 70)

From the enactment of ESEA in 1965 to its most recent reauthorization, ESSA, in 2015, educational law has evolved to focus on parent involvement and how school leaders involve parents in schooling.

Statement of Problem

ELL students' overall academic achievement and high school graduation rates are lower than non-ELL students (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). For the 2015–2016 school year,

ELL students' graduation rate was 67%, while the graduation rate for all students was 84% (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.-a). In 2019, 5% of students in Grade 12 were ELL students (NCES, 2020); however, ELL students enter and finish post-secondary education at a rate lower than non-ELL students (Kanno & Cromley, 2013). Parent involvement in school promotes positive academic performance in students (Good et al., 2010). Research is needed to investigate the current practices by high school teachers to involve ELL students' parents.

The number of ELL students enrolled in United States schools has increased significantly in urban schools (Li & Peters, 2020). In 2019, almost 15% of all students enrolled in schools identified as city public schools were ELL students (NCES, 2020). While parents and educators have different perceptions of parental involvement, obstacles hinder ELL parents' participation in school. When parents and educators connect, ELL students have positive outcomes, including enhanced academic achievement and behavior, increased graduation rates, and a better attitude toward school (Henderson et al., 2007; Jeynes, 2005; Soutullo et al., 2016). Promoting positive engagement in students' education may address academic achievement disparities (Jeynes, 2005; McWayne & Melzi, 2014; Wong & Hughes, 2006;). When parents of all ethnic backgrounds engage in their child's learning, students tend to perform better (Louie et al., 2019).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify perceived strategies urban high school teachers use to involve ELL parents and to identify whether perceived barriers exist. The study had two intended outcomes aligned with the research questions. The first outcome was to determine what effective parent involvement practices ELL students' teachers and principals use to involve parents of ELL students in their child's schooling. The second intended outcome was to

determine what ELL teachers perceive as obstacles to the school's current practices involving ELL students' parents in their child's schooling.

Research Questions

1. What are English Language Learners' teachers' perceptions of the parent involvement strategies educators in urban public schools use to involve Hispanic ELL parents?
2. What do teachers of English Language Learners perceive as potential barriers to engaging and involving Hispanic ELL parents?

Overview of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters focused on how parents of ELL students are involved in school. Relevant background information on ELL students, including the number of ELL students in U.S. public schools and their academic achievement, is provided. The problem statement and research questions serve to familiarize the reader with the need for the research. The conceptual framework provides the basis for the research. Definitions of key terms related to this study provide the reader with insight into topics about ELL students to increase clarity throughout the study. Finally, the study limitations and delimitations, along with the study organization, are outlined in this chapter.

This research used a basic qualitative design to answer the two research questions guiding the study. The researcher conducted focus interviews to seek feedback from high school teachers, graduation coaches, and ESL teachers Si about their perception of ELL parental involvement. Six content teachers, three graduation coaches, and five ESL teachers participated

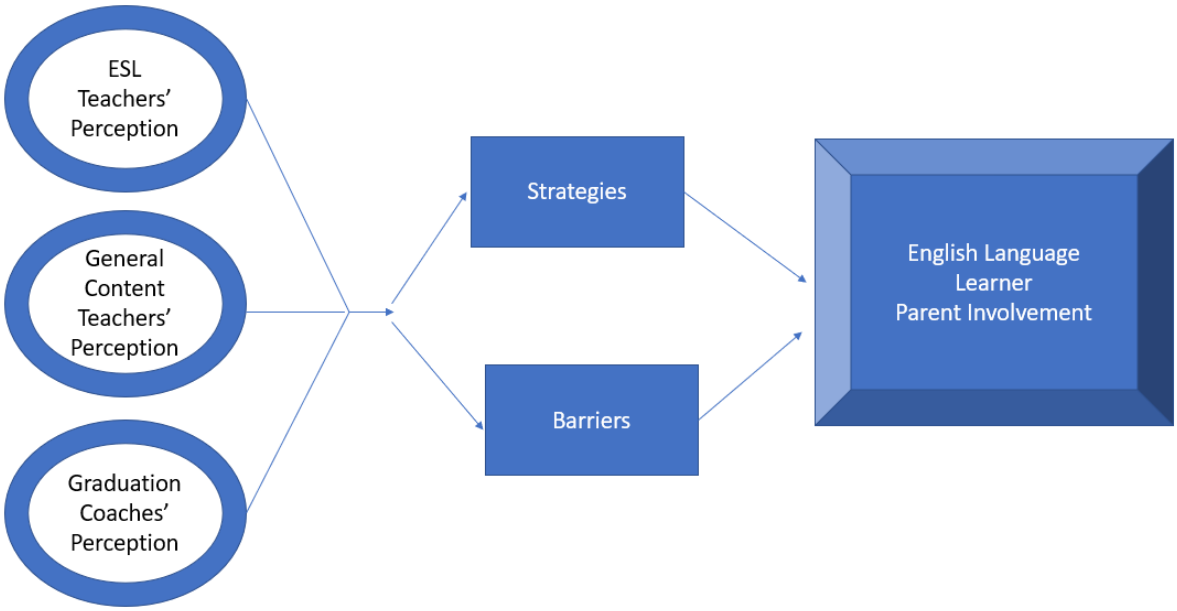
in the study. The interview questions were designed to identify teachers' perceptions of effective practices urban high school personnel use to involve ELL parents in their child's school.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework for the study. High school teachers develop strategies to sustain ELL students' parents' involvement with their child's school. The review of relevant research showed ELL students have positive outcomes when their parents, teachers, and principals work together. For some ELL parents, obstacles impede their ability to participate in their child's education actively. Educators identified perceived barriers limiting family-school partnerships (Good et al., 2010). This research explored effective strategies school teachers can use to enhance the experience for ELL parents. Parental involvement can promote non-native English-speaking students' academic success and positively impacts students' academic performance (Yeh, 2019).

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework – Teachers' Perception of Strategies and Barriers Influencing ELL Parental Involvement



Definition of Terms

Achievement Gap occurs when an outcome for one group (race/ethnicity, gender, or other) is statistically significantly higher than another group (NCES, n.d.)

An *Assistant Principal* is a person responsible for assisting the school principal in the planning, organization, administration, and management of an assigned secondary school with an emphasis on improving the school's instructional program. (Newport News Public Schools, n.d.)

Educational Attainment refers to the highest grade of regular school attended and completed by an individual (NCES, n.d.).

English Language Learner (ELL) is an individual who is 3 to 21 years old, enrolled in or preparing to join an elementary or secondary school, was born in another country, or whose native language is a language other than English (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.-b).

English as a Second Language (ESL) is a program of techniques, methodology, and particular curriculum designed to teach English Language Learners English language skills. The

program may include listening, speaking, reading, writing, study skills, content vocabulary, and cultural orientation. ESL instruction is usually in English with little use of the native language (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.-c).

A *Graduation Coach* is a person in a high school who identifies, assists, encourages, and connects students at risk of not graduation with the options and resources they need to be successful (Newport News Public Schools, n.d.)

Hispanic or Latino refers to a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish cultures or origin, regardless of race. The is used interchangeably with the shortened term *Hispanic* (NCES, 2020).

Immigrant Children refers to persons aged 3 to 21 who were not born in any state and had not attended one or more schools in any one or more states for more than three full academic years (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.-g).

Parent Involvement in the educational system, as defined by the U.S. Department of Education, refers to

> The participation of parents in regular, 2-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including; Assisting their child's learning; Being actively involved in their child's education at school; Serving as full partners in their child's education, and being included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child; and The carrying out of other activities such as those described in section 1118 of the ESEA Section 9101(32).

The *Principal* is the school's leader and promotes equity and excellence in education for each student (National Association of Secondary School Principals, n.d.)

Limitations/Delimitations

Limitations are factors or conditions the researcher does not have control over. This study's limitations included the researcher's purposeful sampling of teachers who teach ELL students, graduation coaches, and ESL teachers. All participants work in the same school division and reside in eastern Virginia. The data collection period was one month, which may have posed a limitation. The second limitation was the researcher's current role as an assistant principal in the same school division selected for the study, which may have impacted participant responses.

Delimitations are conditions controlled by the researcher. The delimitations of this study were sample size and location. The study took place in a mid-size school division in eastern Virginia and captured educators' views in two high schools. Thus, this study may not be generalized to schools in other metropolitan, suburban, or rural areas or to educators at elementary or middle schools. The second delimitation was the number of participants. The researcher studied 14 educators within the two high schools.

Organization of the Study

The researcher organized this study into five chapters. Chapter One gave the reader background information on the study, including the historical information, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the research, research questions, an overview of the study, the conceptual framework, definition of terms, limitations/delimitations of the study, and the organization of the study. Chapter Two reviewed the current literature on ELL students and parental involvement. It included various studies to inform the reader of ELL parents' rights, how they are involved in their child's schooling compared to non-ELL parents, effective parent-

school relationships, ELL academic achievement, and obstacles hindering parental involvement. The research shared limitations, such as language barriers, the economy, lack of diverse resources, parents unaware of their rights, engaging parents and families, and professional development. The chapter ends with missing pieces in ELL parental involvement. Chapter Three contained the methodology, including the study's purpose, research design, research questions, site and sample selection, instrumental design, data collection procedures, data treatment/management, data analysis techniques, and methodology summary. Chapter Four shared the results of the dissertation study, including themes that emerged from the study. In Chapter Five the summary and discussion of the findings are shared. The researcher explained the recommendation that education leaders should employ. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future studies and personal reflections.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

English Language Learner students are the fastest-growing subgroup of students in the United States, especially in urban schools (Li & Peters, 2020). With close to four million ELL students reporting Spanish as their native language, it is the most common language spoken by ELL students. Spanish-speaking ELL students account for nearly 75% of all ELL students (NCES, 2020). From the 2009–2010 school year to the 2017–2018 school year, the NCES report that public schools in the United States documented an increase of 191,665 Spanish-speaking ELL students. While ELL students continue to migrate to the United States, the proportion of first- and second-generation immigrants are simultaneously increasing (Stufft & Brogadir, 2011).

English Language Learner students are at risk for poor academic performance and need interventions to support their educational development (Sanders et al., 2018). In countries participating in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), many migrant students may have lower educational outcomes than their native peers (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2019). In the 2015–2016 school year, 84% of all students nationwide graduated from high school in 4 years; for ELL students, the graduation rate was 67%, up from 57% in 2010–2011 (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.-a). Ross (2016) found positive correlations between parental involvement and high school completion for all students. In the study, Ross examined various aspects of parental involvement that influence high school graduation and post-secondary school attendance in a cohort of students during their tenth and twelfth-grade years. Specifically, parents' participation in extracurricular activities and school functions positively predicted high school graduation. Parents' educational expectations of their children are paramount in predicting whether students from all backgrounds persist toward high

school completion and attend post-secondary school. Communication between home and school regarding students' behavior was negatively associated with dropping out of school and not enrolling in post-secondary education. It is advantageous for ELL children's parents to participate in school-related activities (Ross, 2016).

This literature review focused on ELL parents' involvement and participation in school. The researcher used the term parental involvement throughout this paper to describe the range of activities parents and families of ELL students participate in to help their children. The review highlighted the importance of ELL parents' participation in their child's school and the perceived barriers preventing their participation. The literature review also includes how ELL parents participate in school, how schools encourage ELL parental involvement, and how professional development can strengthen school and family interactions,

Search Process

The Virginia Tech Online Library search engine was the primary resource used during the literature review process. The researcher utilized the interlibrary loan program to obtain resources not readily available online. Searches for relevant literature were conducted from September 2020 to December 2020, with additional searches completed, as needed, to support this study. The research process began with researching dissertations on ELL students to narrow the focus to a few aspects of ELL students' education. The initial search focused on factors impacting ELL students' academic achievement and teachers' perceptions of ELL students and their parents. During the review of research, barriers affecting ELL students' academic achievement emerged. These topics relating to barriers to ELL students included academic achievement, professional development of school staff, students' motivation, and parental

involvement. After exploring various aspects of ELL students, the search narrowed to parental involvement. Key terms searches included English Language Learners, ELL students, Hispanic students, parental involvement, communication barriers, and parent-school relationships. Bibliographies and article references helped the researcher to identify related articles. Beginning in September 2020, the researcher uploaded 136 resources into Mendeley, including dissertations, websites, journal articles, and other peer-reviewed resources. After closely reading the abstracts and research of over 150 studies, the researcher used at least 60 articles to report ELL students and parental involvement.

The Significance of Parent Involvement in ELL Student Education

Parent involvement, whether home-based or school-based, is advantageous for ELL students (Niehaus & Adelson, 2014). One of the most important aspects of schooling for children is the connection between home and school environments. Students tend to do better when families of all ethnic backgrounds engage in their child's learning. Principals leading effective schools value parent-school relationships (Louie et al., 2019). Despite language barriers, parents are interested in their children's education and desire to be more connected to the school (Isik-Ercan, 2012).

Parents of ELL students and school staff have different perceptions of parental involvement (Wassell et al., 2017). While teachers perceive parents who come to school events, i.e., report card night) as good parents, ELL parents are active in their child's education in other meaningful ways. Parent involvement structures are not always visible to the school. Parents tutor their children, encourage them to behave in school, and tell them they can have a better life

(Mena, 2011). Harper and Pelletier (2010) suggested teachers should offer suggestions on how parents can become involved.

ELL Parent Rights

The U.S. Department of Education (2015) has provided information and guidelines for schools and school systems regarding parents and guardians who do not speak, listen, read, or write proficient English. School personnel must communicate with parents in a language parents understand. School enrollment and registration, student reports, parent meetings, handbooks, and programs must be accessible to ELL parents. Additionally, school leaders must provide parents with free translation or interpretation services and not rely on students, friends, or untrained staff to translate. These translators and interpreters must know specialized terms in both languages (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

English Language Learner and Non-English Language Learner Parents

Harper and Pelletier's (2010) study indicated ELL parents contributed to their child's education just as much as non-ELL parents. Harper and Pelletier studied differences in the frequency of ELL parents' communication, involvement, and knowledge of their child's reading and mathematics abilities compared to parents whose first language was English (EL1). The study involved 42 kindergarten ELL students, one parent per student, and their teachers. All children were from a diverse Canadian school board with 23 EL1 s and 19 ELL students. Many of the EL1 families only spoke one language. The home languages of ELL families were East Indian, East Asian, European, Arabic, African, and other languages that did not fit in the category. The collected data included parent and teacher questionnaires and student scores on the Test of Early Reading Ability and the Number Knowledge Test. Parents completed a

questionnaire designed to capture parents' perceptions of their children's ability in reading and mathematics (Harper & Pelletier, 2010).

Harper and Pelletier's (2010) used two chi-square analyses to determine if EL1 and ELL families differed in the frequency of communication with their children's teachers and the level of involvement. As indicated by the teacher, the first chi-square analysis revealed both groups differ in their frequency of communication. The analysis of data indicated the percentage of EL1 families' communication with the teacher was 0% – never, 39% – occasionally, and 61% – often. In contrast, the percentage of ELL families' communication with the teacher was 16% – never, 74% – occasionally, and 10% – often. The second chi-square analysis assessed the difference in the levels of involvement of EL1 and ELL parents. The analysis revealed no significant relationship between the two groups and parent involvement—not involved, somewhat involved, and very involved. The level of involvement of EL1 parents was 0%, 39%, and 61%, respectively, while the level of involvement of ELL parents was 5%, 37%, and 58%, respectively (Harper & Pelletier, 2010).

Harper and Pelletier's (2010) study also compared the two groups to determine if there was a difference in parents' ratings of their students' reading ability and students' actual reading ability. Overall, EL1 families rated their children as more capable of reading than the actual reading scores; yet, there was no difference in the reading abilities of both groups. The EL1 and ELL families did not differ in the ratings of their children's mathematical abilities. There was no difference in both groups of children's mathematical abilities. The combined results of the analysis indicated that while communication between ELL and parents and their child's school is

less frequent than that of English-speaking parents, ELL parents participate in their child's learning at the same rate as English-speaking parents (Harper & Pelletier, 2010).

Ryan et al. (2010) studied the impact cultural orientation had on the rate at which Latino ELL parents and non-Latino parents participated in their children's education. The study comprised 74 Latino and 30 non-Latino parents of students in an elementary school dual-language program. The Latino parents were immigrants, and the non-Latino parents included White and ethnic minority Americans. Parents in this study received a questionnaire that assessed their and others' involvement in their children's education and the importance of their children's academic and social success. Ryan et al. found no significance in the rate at which Latino and non-Latino parents engage in their child's education. Additional findings showed that Latino parents valued academic and social success more than non-Latino parents. Home-based participation versus school-based participation was greater for Latino than non-Latino families (Ryan et al., 2010).

Effective Parent-School Relationships

Niehaus and Adelson (2014) examined the relationship between parental involvement, school support, social-emotional outcomes, and ELL students' educational outcomes as a part of a longitudinal study conducted by the NCES. Niehaus and Adelson examined 1,020 third-grade ELL students from 420 schools in the United States; 97% of students attended public schools, and 79% of students attended large elementary schools with more than 500 students. The researchers randomly selected students with 1 to 14 participants per school with an average of 2.42 students at each student. Of the 1,020 ELL students, 87% were Hispanic, 10% were Asian /Pacific Islanders, 3% were White, and less than 1% were Black, Native American, or

Multiracial. Half of the students were males, and the other half were females. Spanish speakers represented 87% of the students.

Niehaus and Adelson (2014) administered surveys to parents, teachers, and administrators. Parent surveys focused on parents' level of school involvement. School involvement was defined as parent participation in school events and communication with their children's teachers. Teachers completed a three-part survey related to services provided to ELL students, resources available in students' native language, and teachers' level of training in ELL instruction. The last part of the survey controlled for students receiving special education services. Additionally, school administrators completed a survey to measure ELL family outreach services, such as providing interpreters at school meetings and translating school documents.

The results of the school support construct showed that public schools, Title I schools, schools with larger student enrollment, schools with more minority students, and schools with more ELL students provided more school support for ELL students and families (Niehaus & Adelson, 2014). Students with a high enrollment of Hispanic ELL students have resources available to them, such as interpreters, translated documents, and parent outreach activities. In contrast, schools attended by Asian/Pacific Islanders did not offer this level of school support. Asian/Pacific Islanders reported fewer social-emotional concerns within their ELL population than Hispanic ELL students. The ELL students from lower SES backgrounds reported more social-emotional problems. Spanish-speaking ELL students internalized and externalized negative situations at a higher rate than their peers. Externalizing problems include inattention,

off-task behaviors, and difficulties with classmates while internalizing problems include worry, loneliness, sadness, and anxiety. (Niehaus & Adelson, 2014).

Further, Niehaus and Adelson (2014) found students with active parents tended to have fewer social-emotional difficulties. Social-emotional concerns with students decreased when parents engaged in schooling. Moreover, the decrease in social-emotional problems led to an increase in academic success. Parental involvement is vital to the success of ELL students (Good et al., 2010).

Principals' Impact on School Culture and Academic Achievement

The NCES released data examining parent involvement in school-based engagement opportunities (Merlin & NCES, 2021). The data compared the percentage of U.S. public school principals that offered opportunities for parental involvement by school level and involvement categories. In each category represented, primary school principals offered more activities than high school principals. Middle school principals offered fewer activities than elementary school principals but more than high school principals. The data revealed that 92% of principals held open-house or back-to-school nights. Additionally, 84% of the principals provided regular scheduled schoolwide parent-teacher conferences. Eighty-six percent offered involvement in governance, while 81% had opportunities for parents to volunteer in school regularly or as needed. Seventy-five percent of principals created opportunities for parents to become involved in school instructional issues, and 68% of principals offered opportunities for parents to participate in budget decisions. The categories with less offered parent involvement opportunities included the signing of school-parent compact and parent education workshops with 65% and 64%, respectively (Merlin & NCES, 2021).

The behaviors of school leaders are critical in addressing ELL parents (Simpson, 2018). Principals are the educational leaders in the school building. McGee et al. (2015) found a significant factor in principal leadership was ensuring all educators have resources to meet the needs of ELL students. All educators in the school building should have access to professional learning geared towards ELL students that promotes a culturing of learning. Stepanek et al. (2010) reported lessons from administrators in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States based on research, evaluation, and technical experience. One principal participant attended ELL student professional development sessions alongside the teachers. Participating in professional learning with teachers allowed the principal to understand the instructional strategy teachers were learning and determine how to monitor the implementation of the strategy in the classroom. It is the responsibility of everyone in the school community to ensure that ELL students are successful.

Overall, Stepanek et al. (2010) found that families feel welcome when principals host outreach activities that connect parents and the community. School events are successful when leaders accommodate parents' work schedules, provide childcare and transportation, and include extended family members. School leaders found offering educational activities such as family literacy programs and English as Second Language classes for families was an excellent way to get families to come into the school (Stepanek et al., 2010).

Parent involvement takes on many dimensions; therefore, school leaders must attend to many factors in engaging families (Tung et al., 2011). Tung et al. studied principals' actions in two high-performing schools and two improving schools in Boston. Two of the consistently high-performing schools and one of the steadily improving schools were elementary schools.

The other steadily improving school was a high school. In all schools, 26% to 60% of students were non-native speakers of English, and 23% to 46% of students were students of limited English proficiency. School success was measured using the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System tests pass rate for intermediate to advanced English proficiency students (Tung et al., 2011).

In addition to the organizational, cultural, and instructional practices, Tung et al. (2011) set out to find what community engagement practices and professional development the school's staff attributed to success with ELL students. Research findings suggested a connection between leaders' ethnic backgrounds and experiences with ELL students' outcomes. In schools where the principal or staff do not share the ELL students' language and culture, the principal led a process for prioritizing cultural competencies for staff whose backgrounds differed from ELL students. Cultural competency professional development was part of the school culture. For the high school in the study, teachers modeled respect for ELL students' culture and perspective, particularly their academic background (Tung et al., 2011).

Principals created a climate of safety and belonging for ELL students and their families (Tung et al., 2011). Students echoed a sense of home-school community and familiarity. School leaders hired staff that represented the ELL students at each school. Teachers understood how students felt and were able to relate to their experiences. The school staff developed formal structures to build students' self-esteem (Tung et al., 2011). The building leaders developed strategic partnerships with community organizations to provide more resources for ELL students (Tung et al., 2011). School staff understood that not all families could participate in their child's education in the same way. The school leaders differentiated parental involvement by being

aware of parents' working hours and offering meetings at convenient times for parents. School leaders focused on family engagement through phone calls at the high school level. Teachers made phone calls to parents in their native language and focused on students' academic progress. At the elementary level, schools reported offering social events to parents and making home visits before the start of the school year (Tung et al., 2011).

The steady increase of ELL students in urban and rural areas has created new professional development needs for teachers and administrators (Louie et al., 2019). In a mixed-methods study consisting of surveys and interviews, Louie captured the perception of 23 Washington state principals' and vice principals' professional development needs and challenges around ELL students. The administrators in the study had between one and 20 years of leadership experience. Louie et al. found that 65% of administrators had received professional development centered on ELL students. However, ELL-centered professional development accounted for less than 6% of the required clock hours. Fifty-seven percent of the principals and vice principals desired family and community engagement strategies (Louie et al., 2019).

In addition, Louie et al. (2019) found principals wanted professional development to further their leadership and support teachers. Only 34% of principals reported receiving professional development on family and community involvement strategies, and 57% desired professional development on the topic. In contrast, 65% of principals reported receiving research-based instructional strategies for ELL professional development, and 64% preferred professional development on this topic. The results show the principals surveyed are more interested in instructional strategies for ELL students than ELL parental engagement.

Similarly, Bell et al. (2017) examined how using strategic professional development could increase home-school connections. The study included 48 PreK to third-grade teachers and administrators from two school districts. The participants attended professional development sessions on how educators could improve home-school relationships. The workshops first focused on helping teachers examine their literacy and language beliefs. During the 10-month seminar, the focus shifted to include an intentional focus on culturally relevant instruction, such as home experiences and parent involvement (Bell et al., 2017).

The research of Bell et al. (2017) used a Likert scale and open-ended survey items to measure changes in teachers' and administrators' perspectives regarding ELL students. Through workshops, educators changed their perception of what constitutes parental involvement. Participants increased their knowledge of ELL culture. After the professional development, participants' ratings increased from 3.03 (*SD* = .84) to 4.00 (*SD* = .51). Participants' knowledge of how to apply culturally responsive teaching increased from 2.71 to 3.90 (*SD* = .69) after the professional development. Participants' knowledge of parent collaboration increased from 2.51 (SD = .97) to 3.95 (SD = .67). At least one-third of the participants participated in creating an inclusive community. Participants wanted to engage parents in culturally responsive family activities (Bell et al., 2017).

Similarly, Okhremtchouk et al. (2019) quantitative research studied ELL students' readiness factors among teachers. Specifically, how well are Arizona public school teachers prepared to meet the needs of ELL students. The study consisted of 444 high school teachers in Arizona. Of the 444 teachers who responded to the survey, 33% had ELL coursework embedded in their program, 56% had master's degrees, 45% spoke a language other than English, and 50%

had ten or more years of teaching. The survey asked participants to rate their self-competencies and instructional beliefs. The results suggested that the education entity where the participants worked played a significant role in expanding teachers' professional capital. Thus, school divisions must acknowledge the need for teachers to support ELL students and provide professional development centered on supporting ELL students.

McGee et al. (2015) examined the leadership practices to support teaching and learning in ELL students. The study site was in New Zealand, where the number of ELL students continues to grow. Principals, ESL teachers, and classroom teachers from two urban schools participated in the study. School A consisted of students from a predominately high socioeconomic background. About 10% of the students in School A were from non-English speaking backgrounds. School B had 50% fewer students than school A, and 30% of their students were from non-English speaking backgrounds with low socioeconomic backgrounds. The results of the study showed successful leadership provided opportunities for professional development. At School A, regular staff professional development sessions centered on pedagogy and cultural knowledge. Teachers valued the information sessions hosted by the principal and ESL teacher. They felt encouraged by school leaders to seek ESL qualifications. They attended workshops outside of school hours (McGee et al., 2015).

Research results also indicated challenges to success (McGee et al., 2015). Business-like approaches and marginalization of ESL in school presented challenges in School A. While the school had systems in place, the school did not differentiate any systems regarding ELL students. Teachers participated in professional development, but none focused on ELL students. The school lacked resources to support ELL students. Teacher Assistants (TAs) were responsible for

the ESL program. The TAs knew ESL strategies but lacked formal teacher training. Teachers in School A believed the responsibility of teaching ELL students was the ESL teacher or TA. Teachers in School B varied in their beliefs about who is responsible for ELL students (McGee et al., 2015).

Academic Achievement

Yeh (2019) conducted a study involving longitudinal data from 2,586 ELL students across 523 high schools to examine the relationship between parental involvement in education and students' post-secondary school enrollment. Yeh expanded upon their previous research to study a sophomore cohort of non-native English speakers who were a part of the original research. Parent involvement was how often the parent contacted the school about their child's academic performance for the current school year, plans after high school, course selection, behavior problems, and volunteer work. The parent-student involvement consisted of questions related to parent-student discussions about education-related issues, such as how often the parent discussed school courses with the student, discussed things studied in class with the student, discussed grades with the student, provided advice about plans for college entrance exams, and provided advice about applying to postsecondary school after high school (Yeh, 2019).

After controlling for socioeconomic and linguistic factors, four parental involvement predictors were parent-school involvement, parent-student involvement, home culture, and home literacy environment (Yeh, 2019). The results suggested the most prominent indicator of ELL students' enrollment in educational programs following high school graduation is whether ELL parents were active in their child's schoolwork. The term active refers to engaging in conversation related to school courses, grades, and standardized testing such as the American

College Testing or Scholastic Aptitude Test (Yeh, 2019). The literature in this section suggests parents' role in the school, whether direct or indirect, contributes to ELL students' academic and social-emotional needs.

Gilbert et al. (2017) examined the relationship between the financial stress of parents of elementary ELL and parental academic involvement. Taken from a more extensive study, the 68 third-grade and fourth-grade students, along with their parents, lived in predominantly European-American communities. The students were first-generation and second-generation immigrants. Using a 3-point Likert scale, parents responded rated the following survey items: "I know how my child is doing in school. I talk to my child about things related to what he/she is doing in school. I keep track of my child's progress in school or know his/her grades" (Gilbert et al., 2017, p. 6). In addition, parents answered eight questions related to their financial stress. Gilbert et al. found students whose parents often communicate academic values to their children have higher self-efficacy and value school.

Similarly, Ceballo et al. (2014) studied 223 low-income ELL students to determine the relationship between low-income parents and their participation in school. The student participants completed a questionnaire focused on how their parents communicate educational values, their parents' involvement in schoolwork and activities, and the frequency with which their parents contacted teachers and school committees. Ceballo et al. found parents engage in various activities to support their children's educational pursuits. They also found maternal parents' school and home involvement and academic discussions positively influenced the educational outcomes of high school ELL students (Ceballo et al., 2014).

Parent engagement is paramount in the academic development of students from cultural and linguistic homes (Harper & Pelletier, 2010). This statement is supported by the research of Wei and Zhou (2012). Wei and Zhou conducted a longitudinal, descriptive case study of a language-minority family and their direct involvement with spelling and writing development in school. The study participants were the mother and father and their daughter. The student attended a Thai-Chinese school before migrating to the United States. The parent involvement consisted of supplementary language literacy intervention at home. The collaboration between the teachers at school and the parents at home positively impacted literacy learning outcomes and academic learning. Wei and Zhou reported an increase in a child's language acquisition when parents partner with the school. Even though the study was limited to one family, the finding aligns with parents as effective interventionists in their child's academic performance (Wei & Zhou, 2012).

Engaging Parents and Families

Niehaus and Adelson (2014) reported parents are more engaged in the school when schools offer more support. Parent engagement in school is more complicated when the school has a more diverse population (Tung et al., 2011). Through 24 semi-structured interviews with ELL parents, Poza et al. (2014) found parents participate in schooling in the ways outlined by the school. Participation in schooling included attending conferences and meetings and home-based activities such as reading to children and helping with homework. In the study, 100% of the parents reported participating in meetings, parent workshops, and altering programs such as enrolling children in after-school programs. Eighty-eight percent of parents asked teachers and staff about their child's progress (Poza et al., 2014). Similarly, Terriquez (2013) found Latino

ELL fathers participated in their child's schooling by volunteering at school, serving on school committees, and attending school events, general meetings, and parent-teacher conferences.

Niehaus and Adelson (2014) suggested school leaders build varying avenues of support to accommodate parents' varying needs to encourage 2-way discourse. Schools can increase parental involvement by altering some practices. According to Niehaus and Adelson, schools must acknowledge the complicated schedule of working parents and be flexible in scheduling meetings.

Literacy programs have been found to impact parental engagement. Rivera and Lavan (2012) studied the impact of a family literacy plan and Latino mothers' parental involvement. Creating a literacy program to engage mothers helped establish school and parent relationships and build mothers' self-efficacy to support and advocate for their children. Such programs help strengthen family support for education (Rivera & Lavan, 2012). Further, Harper and Pelletier (2010) suggested that literacy programs benefit ELL students and families. These programs allow parents to learn about their child's abilities through home-based family involvement.

Lee et al. (2012) explored the relationship between attitudes toward schools, parent-child communication, and school commitment action as predictor variables associated with parental involvement and compared English-speaking parents, Latina-speaking parents, and Spanish-speaking parents. Using the NCES 2003 National Household Education Survey, Lee et al. accessed data from 9,481 parents of students 5 to 20 years old in Grade 12 and below. Parent involvement was considered as parents' engagement in their children's school through interactions with school personnel, attending school activities, and teaching behaviors conducive to academic success. The study results indicated parents' involvement was higher in all groups

when three characteristics were present: higher educational level, school commitment, and parent-child communication. However, a negative relationship emerged between parent involvement and the child's age. Lee et al. also reported that Spanish-speaking families are more likely to engage in school involvement when schools share specific school-related information.

Obstacles Hindering Parental Involvement

As the United States continues to become a place for diverse individuals to live, public school educators are challenged with meeting the needs of an increasing community of culturally and linguistically diverse students (Stufft & Brogadir, 2011). The increased number of immigrants presents an abundance of challenges to the education system. Many immigrant parents cannot provide the support expected by U.S. schools due to cultural differences and financial hardships. Parents of ELL students want to be active in their child's school and be part of the hiring process of teachers (Good et al., 2010). Despite ELL parents' desire to connect to the school, research showed that perceived barriers prevented their involvement.

Teachers' perception of ELL parents' participation in school is rooted in educators' culture, social, and political background (Shim, 2018). Soutullo et al. (2016) described barriers related to teachers, school, family, and system factors. Educators may perceive ELL parents' lack of involvement as a lack of interest (Shim, 2018). Conversely, in research conducted by Wassell et al. (2017), urban middle school educators perceived parents' lack of involvement was due to barriers such as complicated home routines, intimidation of or lack of resources, differing languages, and no formal education. Isik-Ercan (2012) also found transportation as a barrier to parental involvement in school. Other perceived barriers identified by research include schools'

inattention to correspondences sent home to families, such as school calendars, newsletters, lunch menus, and general information in Spanish (Shim, 2018; Smith & Stern, 2002).

Language Barriers

Parent communication with their child's school is one essential component of parental involvement (Harper & Pelletier, 2010). Parents who are less fluent in the school language have lower participation in their child's schooling (Gilbert et al., 2017). Through focused interviews, Good et al. (2010) studied Latino ELL parents, teachers, and barriers prohibiting the academic success of ELL students. The Latino ELL population in the school district selected for participation in Good et al.'s study was 36. Eight Spanish-speaking Hispanic mothers were selected because they had children in the district's elementary, middle, and high schools. Four teachers participated in the study and had at least three years of teaching experience with ELL students. Good et al. identified communication gaps between teachers and students, teachers and parents, parents and children, and schools and schools. Other findings included a lack of support for ELL families transitioning to a new environment and culture, a lack of teacher preparation to meet the needs of ELL students, a lack of a systemic articulated district ELL plan, and low academic achievement for Hispanic ELL students. The research found that teachers believed the communication gaps hindered student achievement. Additionally, parents were aware that they lacked the language to communicate with teachers effectively. Parents wanted to learn English and were part of the district's ESL classes for parents. Despite the language barrier, parents felt the school was unwelcoming (Good et al., 2010).

In a study involving Latino ELL students, parents believed information gaps hindered their ability to be active and support their child's schooling (Poza et al., 2014). Hansen-Thomas

et al. (2016) studied the professional development needs of 159 ELL elementary and secondary teachers from 10 rural and small districts. Researchers emailed a structured questionnaire with Likert-type and open-ended questions to teachers in 13 school districts. The most prevalent challenges noted in the survey were a lack of academic vocabulary and time and communication with students and parents. Other challenges included the limited ability to identify the best teaching strategies, lack of training, inability to evaluate students' levels of fluency in their native language, and lack of resources. Teachers noted since ELL parents' primary language is not English, communicating orally and in writing presents a challenge for educators (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016).

Research conducted by Soutullo et al. (2016) also examined language barriers in schools. In their research, Soutullo et al. studied 18 elementary teachers to examine how elementary teachers in a high-need school district with a large immigrant population conceptualize immigration-related barriers. The participants were part of a cohort enrolled in an early childhood education graduate program. Teachers identified barriers to family-school partnerships due to school policies and the school's ineffective use of communication strategies. Other barriers identified were a lack of parents' attendance for school functions such as workshops or meetings, parents' unresponsive to efforts made by teachers to establish contact with them, and families who participated in school were not representative of the school population. The participants acknowledged parents' hesitation to participate because they lacked the resources necessary for school engagement and screening procedures. The teacher participants noted fewer concerns regarding their own disposition that may have impeded parental engagement. A

primary concern the teachers did note was translation; adults ask young children to translate conversations and documents for parents (Soutullo et al., 2016).

In a qualitative study of mothers of elementary-age ELL students, Rivera and Lavan (2012) found that mothers had difficulty helping their children with homework beyond Grade 3 due to language differences. Over three years, Rivera and Lavan interviewed mothers, teachers, principals, and the staff at Chelsea Public School—located in a small suburb outside of Boston. In addition to literacy goals, participants shared how they define parental involvement and how parental involvement affects immigrant families. Researchers found Latina mothers faced barriers to parental involvement due to their lack of language development. Educators interpreted parents' low level of involvement as a lack of caring about education. The limited English proficiency of ELL parents impacted their participation in an English and language arts blog facilitated by their child's second-grade teacher (Shin & Seger, 2016).

Economy and Financial Resources

Another obstacle to ELL parents' involvement in school is the lack of financial resources (Gilbert et al., 2017). For working parents, hindrances to parent participation in schooling are grounded in a lack of time and resources to take off work (Shim, 2018). Gilbert et al. researched the academic engagement of Mexican-heritage immigrant parents and educational outcomes, parents' financial stress, and psychological well-being are associated with students' academic progress. Specifically, parents more concerned with providing financially for their families have higher depressive symptoms and low home-based parental involvement. Parents' lack of English fluency had no impact on their depressive symptoms. In Good et al.'s (2010) research, parents experienced a high level of financial stress and felt trapped by working long hours with low

wages. The reason immigrant parents came to the United States was the economy. Since migrating to the U.S., ELL parents did not have their usual support system to rely upon and verbalized wanting bicultural counselors, psychologists, and health professionals to assist them with the transition. These parents lived in poverty and uncertainty and could not afford the services (Good et al., 2010). According to Good et al.,

> There are situations when children need therapy in order to maintain their academic achievement. Loss of a loved one, divorce, and other problems at home affect their performance at school. We need to look for professional help outside of school, which places an additional financial burden on parents. (p. 333)

Soutullo et al. (2016) reported teachers verbalized that they wanted parents to read to young children; however, parents did not have books at home. Additionally, the families lacked resources such as computers and the internet. The lack of resources inhibited teachers' ability to communicate with families using technology. Parents might feel discouraged by not knowing English and having access to resources to help their children (Soutullo et al., 2016).

Lack of Diverse Resources

Research also indicated the lack of resources as a prominent barrier to parental involvement. Wassell et al. (2017) conducted a qualitative study of seven urban middle schools' STEM educators' perspectives on the family involvement of ELL students who spoke Spanish at home. The two-year study used data from interviews and field notes such as weekly observations of teachers, monthly teacher meetings, and other during-the-day school activities. Wassell et al. also collected artifacts from the school website. An analysis of the data found that teachers verbalized barriers they perceived inhibited families' involvement in school events or

communication with school personnel. Specifically, the school used complicated resources to communicate with parents. The school provided resources to support communication with families. The resources included fliers that were translated into Spanish and sent home with students. The school held orientation and information sessions at the beginning of the year. Students had access to a homework hotline, and parents could access an online platform to view students' grades and other performance data. The school also had a few bilingual staff members to support communication between home and school. Yet, the school's website, which contained valuable information and forms, was not translated into Spanish. Although the school website had a school compact outlining shared responsibility between students, parents, and staff, the school failed to translate the agreement into Spanish. Further, the school had limited access to bilingual translators to communicate with parents. When bilingual staff was available, the school used those staff members to translate during parent-teacher conferences and phone calls home to families (Wassell et al., 2017).

Another challenge schools faced by schools relating to resources was the unavailability of translators during parent-child interactions. Poza et al. (2014) conducted research involving 24 parents to explore how first-generation Latino immigrant parents negotiated a role for themselves in their child's schooling. Through semi-structured interviews, parents reported their children had to translate conversations at parent-teacher conferences. Further, children were required to translate notices sent home by the school. Good et al.'s (2010) study of rural Latino ELL parents and teachers found that parents cannot have meaningful conversations with school staff because schools do not have enough translators or interpreters to bridge the communication gap.

Similarly, research conducted by Soutullo et al. (2016) investigated barriers to facilitating family-school partnerships with ELL families from teachers' perspectives. Soutullo et al. found that school leaders in the study did not consistently communicate information to parents in their native language. Teacher participants reported most correspondences to parents were in English. When the school did send resources home in the parents' native language, the reminder notices were in English. The lack of available resources to communicate effectively presented challenges to the staff (Soutullo et al., 2016).

Conversely, in a survey of 242 ELL students and their parents across four school districts, Ngo (2012) found that 52.5% of parents reported having access to translators or interpreters at school. Half of the parent participants reported seeing welcome signs in diverse languages and photographs of diverse cultures in their child's school. Forty-two percent of parents observed books with diverse cultures (Ngo, 2012). In a study conducted by Isik-Ercan (2012), it was found that schools only provide translators at parent-teacher conferences. Han and Bridglall (2010) suggested schools that offer ELL families services, such as translators for parent-teacher meetings and outreach staff for student enrollment, improve ELL students' academic performance.

Lack of a Welcoming Environment

Good et al. (2010) found ELL parents want to advocate for and have a voice in their child's education, but they perceive school staff as condescending. Parents indicated that school staff did not seem to want parents involved. These parents had lost their trust in the school. Likewise, Shim (2018) conducted a qualitative study on ELL teacher-parent relationships' dynamics from ELL parents' perspectives. The study occurred in a small, diverse town where the

ELL population in the public school system had doubled since 1990. The focus of the 15-minute individual conversations was how parents feel about interacting with their child's teachers. The results indicated a power relationship between ELL parents and teachers that can be generalized. Parents expressed feelings of being judged as having a low IQ because of their limited English proficiency or accent, having no ability to influence teachers' decisions, and being fearful of negative repercussions that may result from them speaking up. One parent participant in Shim's research reported,

> There are many times I want to say something or ask something, but I end up not saying anything because I am afraid that my child will be penalized by a teacher because I made the teacher angry by asking her questions. (p. 23)

According to ELL parents, school personnel tell parents they want to hear from them, but parents do not believe schools are interested in what they say. Shim (2018) reported, "one Hispanic ELL parent in this regard stated that, 'they tell us that our opinions are welcome and that we are free to voice our opinions, but then they do whatever they want to do anyway'" (p. 5). Furthermore, Ngo (2012) examined how ELL students and parents perceived how schools respond to cultural diversity, specifically family-school interactions and involvement of families in activities. He surveyed 242 ELL students and their parents on four Alberta school boards. Ngo found varying degrees to which parents are included in the planning process to promote cultural diversity. Ngo reported that 25% of parents said schools involve them in the planning process to promote diverse cultures. Twenty-seven percent of parents said they helped schools gain cross-cultural skills and knowledge, and 33% said their children's schools involved them in creating services to promote culturally diverse learning (Ngo, 2012).

Parents Unaware of their Rights

Kanno and Kangas (2014) conducted a study to examine the educational practices that result in ELL students' curricular choices in a suburban public high school in Pennsylvania with approximately 2,500 students and 190 diverse ELL populations. Specifically, the focus was on the courses school staff assigned to ELL during course registration. The school offers various courses and multiple levels of the same course (i.e., remedial, regular, advanced, honors, and Advanced Placement). The study consisted of interviews with school and school district personnel. Kanno and Kangas also collected documents about ELL students, such as high school transcripts, the eleventh-grade state test scores, and ACCESS (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Learners) scores.

The research found that school officials denied ELL students access to higher-level classes due to the class expectations such as independent readings and differentiated instruction. Students and parents had the right to challenge the school's recommendations. When surveyed about why ELL students did not request higher courses, ELL students said they did not think about it or did not know it was possible. Parents were unaware of their right to advocate for reversing the school's recommendation and requesting different courses for their children (Kanno & Kangas, 2014). Immigrant families may lack the structure and resources to advocate for their children (Isik-Ercan, 2012). A policy established to garnish more parental participation presented a barrier to some ELL parents. The school district required all volunteers to register using their social security numbers. The policy created an obstacle for undocumented family members to engage with the school (Soutullo et al., 2016). School leaders exert substantial influence over how policy is enacted in their schools (Mavrogordato et al., 2020).

Summary

Most of the research on ELL parents and family involvement in schools referenced in this literature review focused on how families engage with schools and barriers limiting their participation in the school community. School principals' leadership guides the direction of ELL students' parents' engagement. The literature review included research from the perspectives of students, parents, teachers, and administrators. Studies have shown that parents want to be involved in their child's education, but barriers inhibit their participation (Good et al., 2010). Few research studies have combined the perception of high school ELL students' parents, principals, and teachers.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Home and school-based family engagement are related to children's academic performance (McWayne & Melzi, 2014). Elements such as positive communication and relationship-buildings between schools and families are paramount in supporting home-school connections to support connections. Positive parental involvement is the key to impacting students' academic success (Garbacz et al., 2018). This chapter describes the methodology and procedures that the researcher used for this qualitative study. The chapter includes the purpose of the study, research design, methodology and justification, research questions, site/sample selection, instrument design, instrument validity and reliability, data collection procedures, data treatment and management, data analysis techniques, and methodology summary.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to identify perceived strategies urban high school teachers use to involve ELL parents and to identify whether perceived barriers exist. Parent participation is paramount to student success (Lasky & Karge, 2011). Providing meaningful parental involvement results in an increase in attendance, higher levels of student achievement, increased graduation rates, and improved student attitudes toward education (August & Hakuta, 1997; Epstein, 2001; Lasky & Karge, 2011). The study provides insight into the ways ELL students, teachers, and principals involve parents in ELL students. In addition, the study can provide insight into what ELL teachers perceive to be obstacles to the school's current practices in involving ELL students' parents in their child's schooling.

Research Design and Methodology

"Qualitative research is based on the belief that people construct knowledge in an ongoing fashion as they engage in and make meaning of an activity, experience, or phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 23). In research with a qualitative approach, focus group interviews are used to maximize data collection. For this reason, the researcher used a qualitative study to reveal the perception of parental involvement strategies high school teachers use to engage ELL students' parents and whether the practices are effective. Interviews are used in research when a researcher is unable to observe behaviors or feelings or when events that have transpired cannot be replicated (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Research Questions

To understand the perceptions of ELL students' parents, teachers, and principals on parental involvement with ELL students, the following research questions guided this study:

1. What are English Language Learners' teachers' perceptions of the parent involvement strategies educators in urban public schools use to involve Hispanic ELL parents?
2. What do teachers of English Language Learners perceive as potential barriers to engaging and involving Hispanic ELL parents?

Data Collected

"Interviewing is often the major source of the qualitative data needed for understanding the phenomenon under study" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 136). The researcher interviewed 14 teachers: six content teachers, three graduation coaches, and five ESL teachers to gain their perspectives on the parental involvement strategies used with parents of ELL students at their high schools. The data collected also identified potential barriers to engaging and involving

Hispanic ELL parents based on content teachers, graduation coaches, and ESL teachers' perspectives.

Site/Sample Selection

A school division in eastern Virginia was selected as the site for this study. The pseudonym, Community School Division (CSD), is used when referencing the selected school division in this study. The CSD is a midsize urban school division serving students in various school settings. This division has over 30 instructional sites, including high schools, middle schools, elementary schools, and alternative settings. High school enrollment accounts for 25% to 30% of the school division enrollment.

The CSD has ESL teachers and teacher specialists to support ELL students. Less than 10% of the CSD student population in the fall of 2022 were ELL students. According to the Council of Great City Schools (Uro et al., 2019), more ELL students speak Spanish than any other language. Within the last three years, the CSD has seen an increase in the number of Hispanic ELL students. Study participants were associated with two high schools identified from the School Quality Profiles found on the VDOE website (www.doe.virginia.gov).

The researcher selected two high schools with the highest enrollment of ELL students in the school division. In the 2022-2023 school year, ELL students represented less than 20% of the student population at both schools. Each school has between 3 to 5 ESL teachers and at least one graduation coach.

This study design used purposeful sampling. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), purposefully selecting participants or sites in qualitative research is more optimal than a large selection of participants and sites. The experience participants had in educating ELL students

varied. One hundred percent of ESL teachers are ELL students. Content teachers students had no more than five ELL students. The number of ELL students assigned to graduation coaches varied based on students' academic progress. The researcher identified teachers with a higher ELL enrollment compared to other teachers in each of the three selected high schools and invited these teachers to participate in the study. Overall, the participants for this study included school principals, teachers, and parents from the three identified high schools in CSD.

Instrument Design

This qualitative study used semi-structured focus group interviews. Interviews with open-ended questions allow the research to elicit views and opinions from the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher developed a unique data collection instrument for use with the focus groups. Participants in each focus group responded to 8 questions. Table 1 outlines focus group interview questions aligned with the research questions.

Table 1

Alignment of Research Questions and Teacher Focus Group Interview Questions

Research Question	Focus Group Question
What are English Language Learners teachers' perceptions of the parent involvement strategies educators in urban public high schools use to involve Hispanic ELL parents?	In your school, who is responsible for the ELL population?
	Can you describe ELL policies and practices at your school?
	What strategies do you use to engage, communicate, and involve ELL parents?
	How does ELL parents' level of engagement compare to non-ELL parents?

	What resources, including professional development, are available from the school to help aid ELL parent engagement, communication, or involvement?
What do teachers of English Language Learners perceive as potential barriers to engaging and involving Hispanic ELL parents?	Can you tell me about a situation that required communication between you and an ELL parent? What was the outcome? Are there any barriers that hinder you from engaging, communicating, and involving ELL parents? What resources do you need to help you engage, communicate, and involve ELL parents?

Instrument Validity and Reliability

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), validity and reliability in qualitative research are achieved through attention to the study's conceptualization, how the data are collected, analyzed, and interpreted, and how findings are presented. To achieve validity and reliability, expert researchers field-tested questions, employed member checking, and used rich, thick description (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Field-testing the data collection instrument aimed to improve the questions, format, and instructions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As indicated by Creswell and Creswell, field-testing the focus group questions allowed the researcher to gauge how long the study would take. For this study, high school assistant principals and principals in a doctoral studies cohort field-tested the focus group questions to ensure responses to the questions provided data to address the research questions. To maintain ethical standards, the researcher employed member checking to ensure accurate perceptions were captured during the focus groups. The researcher presented the interpretations and finding to one-third of the participants. As aligned to rich, thick descriptions, the researcher provided enough descriptions of the setting

and participants such that the reader could determine if the findings could be transferred (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Additionally, to aid in validity and reliability, expert researchers clarify the bias and check transcripts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher clarified her biased approach since she had an interest in ELL students as the assistant principal supervising the ELL department in a high school. Finally, the researcher checked the transcripts to ensure reliability. Further, in this study, the researcher employed multiple validity and reliability strategies to assess the accuracy of the study's findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher received CITI training (Appendix A) and Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (Appendix B) from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. The IRB application included copies of the Information Sheet for Participation in a Research Study (Appendix C), the Focus Group Protocol (Appendix D), Focus Group Interview Questions (Appendix E), and a copy of the Verbal Consent (Appendix F). Upon IRB approval, an application to request to conduct research was sent via email to the superintendent's designee of CSD. The application and communication explained the study and sought permission to invite high school teachers, graduation coaches, and ESL teachers to participate in this study. After receiving consent from the superintendent's designee (Appendix G), the researcher sent an email to each potential participant to introduce the study (Appendix H) and provide permission from the superintendent to invite each of them to participate in the research. The researcher sent a second email request one week later to non-respondents. A week prior to the focus group interviews, the researcher sent a follow-up email to all participants (Appendix I). The email also included the date and time of the interview and the research questions.

Finally, data for this study were collected from October to November 2022 following IRB approval. The data were collected during three teacher focus groups following the established protocol for the study. All teachers selected for participation in this study work with ELL students in the classes they teach. The focus groups were conducted using the Zoom video-conferencing platform. Zoom provided transcripts, and the researcher used a recorder as a secondary recording device to back up the interviews.

Data Treatment/Management

The researcher kept the data collected for the study confidential. The Zoom video-conferencing platform transcripts were saved to the researcher's home laptop. The interviewer was the only person with access to the transcribed interviews. All files relating to the data collected in this study were stored on an external drive that was password protected and locked in a drawer in the researcher's home office. All data gathered during this study will remain secure and stored under guidelines provided by Virginia Tech.

Data Analysis Techniques

Focus group interview transcripts were analyzed to identify themes. Using a pseudonym for research participants respects their privacy (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Participants had to rename themselves using an assigned pseudonym during the focus group interview. The pseudonyms were used to ensure their privacy throughout the data gathering and data analysis process. As data are collected, it is vital to code it (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For this study, the researcher transcribed the focus group interview using audio transcripts from Zoom. The research listened to the audio and adjusted the transcripts as needed. The researcher organized the data using spreadsheets. One question was on each spreadsheet to allow the researcher to

analyze each question separately. Each spreadsheet contained the participant's pseudonym and their response. The researcher grouped similar responses to identify specific thoughts that stood out. The researcher-colored coded participants' responses based on themes that began to emerge.

Timeline

A timeline of the expected study is outlined in Appendix J. The research proposal was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to September 2022. Upon receiving approval from IRB, the researcher submitted a request to conduct research to the Community School Division in September 2022. In November 2022, the researcher conducted all focus group interviews. The data were transcribed and coded by the researcher from November 2022 to December 2022. The researcher described the data and emerging themes from the study in Chapter Four and explained the findings and implications in Chapter Five, as well as the suggestions for future research and reflections in preparation for the February 2023 defense date.

Methodology Summary

The methodology for this study was a basic qualitative design. The purpose of this study was to identify perceived strategies urban school teachers use to involve ELL parents and whether teachers perceive the strategies are effective. In-depth focus group interviews consisting of open-ended questions with 14 content teachers, graduation coaches, and ESL teachers allowed these participants to share their perceptions. The focus group interview questions were organized around two central ideas. These central ideas included teachers’ perception of parental involvement practices teachers and principals use to involve ELL students’ parents and whether teachers perceive the methods to be effective. Overall, ELL teachers' perceptions of ELL

parental involvement can be advantageous to educators and policymakers as the number of ELL students in U.S. public schools continues to increase (Li & Peters, 2020).

Chapter Four: Data Analysis

Parental involvement influences student outcomes in school (Niehaus et al., 2014). This chapter presents the data collected and analyzed during the study. The purpose of this study was to identify perceived strategies urban high school teachers use to involve ELL parents and to identify whether perceived barriers exist. Semi-structured focus group interviews were used with 14 high school educators to capture their perspectives on how urban teachers and principals involve parents of ELL students and if the strategies they use are effective. This chapter presents data collected to answer the study's two research questions:

1. What are English Language Learners' teachers' perceptions of the parent involvement strategies educators in urban public schools use to involve Hispanic ELL parents?
2. What do teachers of English Language Learners perceive as potential barriers to engaging and involving Hispanic ELL parents?

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher used the Virginia School Quality Profile report to identify high schools in the Community School Division (CSD) with the greatest ELL enrollment. The researcher received permission from the CSD superintendent's designee to conduct the research. With the additional permission of principals' permission, the researcher emailed 26 potential participants and received responses from 20 educators agreeing to participate in the research. Leading up to the focus group interviews, six participants canceled because of other commitments. The researcher conducted one focus group interview, and a colleague in a doctoral program conducted three focus group interviews using the established protocol for the study. All of the

focus group interviews were held on a Zoom video-conferencing platform. Zoom provided transcripts, and the researcher used a recorder as a secondary device. The data shared in this chapter were organized by each focus group interview question.

Profile of the Participants

The 14 participants in this study were secondary educators employed with CSD and were involved in teaching or monitoring ELL students. The CSD is a mid-size school division in eastern Virginia with less than 30,000 students. The CSD was chosen as the study site because of its increase in ELL students in recent years. From the 2020–2021 to 2022–2023 school year, ELL enrollment in CSD grew by 268 students (VDOE, 2022). Table 2 outlines the general participant information.

Table 2

Demographics of Participants

Participant	Gender	Number of years in education	Years at the school site	Years of supporting ELL students	School site	Role at school site
ESL1	F	10	9	13	1	ESL Teacher
ESL2	M	7	1	6	1	ESL Teacher
ESL3	F	19	2	3	2	ESL Teacher
ESL4	F	6	5	6	2	ESL Teacher
ESL5	F	5	2	5	2	ESL Teacher
GC1	F	18	10	18	2	Graduation Coach
GC2	F	30	7	7	1	Graduation Coach
GC3	F	6	1	1	1	Graduation Coach
T1	F	16	4	6	1	Teacher
T2	F	27	27	9	1	Teacher
T3	F	4	3	4	2	Teacher
T4	F	22	7	18	2	Teacher
T5	M	7	7	7	2	Teacher

T6	F	34	34	1	2	Teacher

The study consisted of 14 participants from two different school sites. Six participants were from School Site 1, and eight participants were from School Site 2. There were male and 12 female educators. Fifty percent of the participants have ten or more years of experience in the education field. At School Site 1, two participants had been at their school for less than three years, 3 participants had been at their school between 4 and 10 years, and one participant had been at their school for ten or more years. At School Site 2, three participants had been at their school for three or fewer years, four participants had been at the school between 4 and 10 years, and one participant had been at their school for ten or more years. In terms of the participants' experience working with ELL students, overall, three participants had three or fewer years of experience working with ELL students, eight participants had four to ten years of working with ELL students, and three participants had more than ten years of experience working with ELL student.

Focus Group Interview Question 1

Who is responsible for the ELL population in your school? Interview question 1 sought to find participants' perceptions of who is responsible for ELL students; responses are shown in Table 3. Eight participants responded that everyone is responsible for ELL students. One ESL teacher shared that everyone is primarily responsible. The counselor and assistant principal are responsible for communications. The participant continued by saying,

> The entire school is to share the responsibility for the ELL population but in terms of organization. Not all districts have an administrator and assistant principals assigned to

> the English Language Learners, much like you have an assistant principal that oversees special education. The high school has an assistant principal assigned to ELL students. In terms of instruction, compliance, and accommodations, the ESL teacher and testing chair are responsible. (ESL4, *l*6)

The content teachers had varying responses. Two teachers at the same school responded that the school has a dedicated school counselor that works with ELL students. The counselor is responsible, as well as the ESL teacher. T2 elaborates, saying, “it's their job to provide us with a monitoring basis…they provide us with strategies” (*l*12). One teacher participant believed teachers who teach ELL students, along with ESL teachers, are responsible for ELL students. Two teacher participants responded that the ESL teacher is responsible for ELL students. The participant stated, “we have a teacher... she is the person assigned for the students (T4,*l*16). Another teacher participant responded that the ESL teacher and counselor are responsible for ELL teachers. Overall, many teachers recognized that all educators, including principals, graduation coaches, school counselors, content teachers, and ESL teachers, are responsible for ELL students.

Table 3

Perceived Responsibility for ELL Students by Participant

Participant	School site 1	School site 2	Principals	Graduation coaches	School counselors	Content teachers	ESL teachers
ESL1	X		X	X	X	X	X
ESL2	X		X	X	X	X	X
ESL3		X	X	X	X	X	X
ESL4		X	X	X	X	X	X
ESL5		X	X	X	X	X	X
GC1		X	X	X	X	X	X

GC2	X		X	X	X	X	X
GC3	X		X	X	X	X	X
T1	X				X		X
T2	X					X	X
T3		X	X	X	X	X	X
T4		X	X	X	X	X	X
T5		X					X
T6		X					X

Focus Group Interview Question 2

Can you describe ELL policies and practices at your school related to communication and parent involvement? Interview Question 2 asked participants to share the ELL policies and practices; responses are documented in Table 4. Of the 14 participants, 12 referenced a phone interpretation service the school division used as a policy or practice related to communication and parent involvement. Participants at School Site 1 spoke about family engagement nights that were held at the school in previous years.

In addition to the over-the-phone translating service, ESL1 shared that the school division has a family engagement specialist. ESL 1 also indicated that the school division has other resources available if teachers are not successful in phone calls. ESL1 stated,

> We also have family engagement specialists as well…that we can reach out to when calling home is not sufficient or doesn't seem to solve the problem. Um, and there is a form that we complete to send a request for those types of services. And then the family engagement specialists can take a step further, and we'll do home visits, or try to hook up the family with resources to help them, um solve any issues that they may be having in relation to how their students are doing in school. (*l*3)

Another practice shared by a participant was the use of a mass notification system that allows the school to send updates and emergency alerts to students and parents through emails, phone calls, or texts. ESL3 noted, “most phone announcements that go out do not seem to be translated into any other languages” (*l*2l).

ESL3 also talked about a weekly newsletter stating,

> There's a weekly newsletter that the principal sends out, and it gives all the information that students need for the week, announcements about what's going on, and, you know, just general information, and this can be translated into any language. (*l*21)

ESL3 allows time for her students to read the newsletter in class. However, she is under the “impression that most of our parents do not have access to email, so they do not receive the newsletter” (ESL3, *l*21).

T2 recalled that in 2015 and 2016, there were no resources to communicate with parents. As a former Spanish teacher, she recalled she and other Spanish teachers were called upon to communicate with families. “Our ESL teachers have learned Spanish, so they do a lot of communication, but that’s actually not their job” (T2, *l*28). She continued to share that the school has an over-the-phone translating service available, but “teachers are very scared to use it” (T2, *l*28). T2 recalled an ELL parent night held in 2016 and 2017. The school invited students and parents to meet their teachers; ten people came. T2 does not know if it was worth planning the event with such low attendance “when you think about the time you have and effort you have, and the amount of money you have for pizza” (T2, *l*28).

T6 was not aware of any emails coming out about parent involvement stating,

> I see emails coming out to us about how to do grades for the students. I've been on some emails about, you know, accommodations for the students. But I haven't seen an email. I don't remember an email coming through about communicating with parents and guidelines for that (*l*16).

While T6 was unaware of a specific policy at the school, others at the same school site were aware of a practice to facilitate communications.

Almost all teachers recognized policies and practices. The most prominent policy was the use of the phone interpretation service. Other practices and policies noted by ESL teachers included family engagement specialists and family engagement night.

Table 4

School Policies and Practices by Participant

Participant	Phone interpretation service	Family engagement specialist	Family engagement night	Newsletter	Unknown	Grading emails
ESL1	X	X	X			
ESL2	X		X			
ESL3	X	X	X	X		
ESL4	X	X				
ESL5	X	X	X	X		
GC1	X					
GC2	X					
GC3	X					
T1	X					
T2	X					
T3	X					
T4	X					
T5					X	
T6						X

Focus Group Interview Question 3

What strategies do you use to engage, communicate, and involve ELL parents, and what strategies have worked best? The relationship between a student's family members and school personnel is one of the most crucial relationships to a child's development (Clark et al., 2009). A constant theme for this question was "meeting parents where they are" (ESL1, *l*35) as shown in Table 5. This was interpreted as meeting parents' individual needs at the most comfortable level for each parent. Three ESL teachers indicated using WhatsApp, and two teacher participants used email and text messaging. Another ESL teacher created an Instagram page for parents to follow. ESL4 found,

> Parents and students were far more likely to follow our stories. You know, we would post in English, Spanish, French, Chinese, and Tagalog things that might not go out in a Robocall [mass communication system] about a snow day or grades that are due, or graduation is next week…And we could see just from the number of views on our stories and likes on our post that it was actually being seen and shared out. (*l*38)

Participants also recalled ELL family engagement events held at a local church. In collaboration with a local church, a Hispanic police officer, ESL teachers, and other members of the community sponsored outreach events for ELL parents. ESL4 stated,

> At the height of school closures, some colleagues within and outside the school division created an immigration task force. We tried to have events for our ELLs in front of the school, but no parents showed up. We linked up with a Spanish-speaking immigrant

> attending a church in the area and brought our same training materials and technology to the church. The church was packed because there was built-in community trust (*l*38)

The theme of meeting parents where they were was also echoed in the response provided by GC1. She indicated that she and the ESL teacher made home visits to parents and sometimes went to their jobs. She noted that sometimes parents are busy and cannot attend school, but they want to be involved. GC1 stated,

> Being able to get them information that they do want to have…giving them that face-to-face contact and letting them know that, you know, we are available. And then we do recognize that there are certain barriers. But we're here to help them, you know, overcome them, answer any questions, and try to facilitate any needs they may have. (*l*40)

While most ESL teachers used social media, one ESL teacher said, “I have only been trying to communicate with the students in my own classes, and not the parents of the greater population at large, some of whom don't get communicated with much at all” (ESL3, *l*37). The participant shared that he had not focused too much on parent communication but focused on building positive student relationships with students. According to the participant, he used WhatsApp during the Covid-19 Pandemic because it allows for immediate translation, and parents were accustomed to using it. However, the participant found that WhatApp's downfall was that he had to use his cell phone and phone number. ESL3 did not have much success using other social media apps. One participant did not have any particular strategies she used to communicate with ELL parents.

Traditional forms of communication, such as phone calls utilizing the over-the-phone translating service and face-to-face communications, were also used by participants. T2, a fluent Spanish speaker, said, “I am lucky because I speak Spanish, so I can call home and communicate with the Hispanic parents fairly easily” (*l*44). She spoke of trust, a second theme that emerged from this question, stating, “Once you get parents inside the building, they see you are someone they can trust” (*l*44). ESL2 builds parents' trust by establishing initial contact to acknowledge and reinforce positive behavior. He noted, “parents were both thankful that we made contact with them…for me, it is easier to be a positive phone call” (ESL2, *l*36). Trust in a family and school relationship is having faith that the other person will act to sustain the relationship and achieve a positive outcome for the student (Clark et al., 2009).

ESL1 echoed trust in her response, “anything that I can do to get the parents to come into the building has been more successful than calling home” (*l*35). She worked with a Hispanic police officer and other community leaders to hold family nights geared toward high school seniors and their parents. The police officer was well-known by Hispanic parents in the community. ESL1 stated,

> We would all sit around and discuss their transcripts and their grades and get a plan to help them get across the stage for graduation. Parents seemed extremely engaged…they were happy to have that feedback in that one-on-one time with staff and their students. (*l*35)

ESL4 was involved in community events held at the local church. CSD ESL teachers, a Hispanic police officer, and local church leaders sponsored the community event. She acknowledged the parent attendance was full due to built-in *community trust*. ESL4 stated,

> Educators were able to model who you can escalate issues to…we found that parents were so much more open and willing to follow up with us if we met them where they were, like an off-campus site. Unfortunately, for many different reasons, that effort dissolved once the schools reopened. (*l*38)

Teachers in the focus group interview used different strategies to engage parents. These strategies ranged from traditional forms of communication to more technology-based ones. Teachers were also flexible in making home visits and visiting parents' jobs.

Table 5

Parent Involvement Strategies

Participant	Social media and email	Family Engagement	Home visits	Communicate with students	Traditional methods	Fluent in parents' home language
ESL1	X	X			X	X
ESL2	X					
ESL3		X		X		
ESL4	X	X				
ESL5	X	X				X
GC1		X	X			
GC2	X		X		X	
GC3			X		X	
T1					X	
T2					X	X
T3					X	
T4	X					
T5	X					
T6					X	

Focus Group Interview Question 4

How does ELL parents' level of engagement compare to non-ELL parents?

Interview Question 4 asked participants to share their perception of ELL parents' participation and the responses in Table 6. A theme developed from this question is ELL parent participation is lower than non-ELL parents. Thirteen participants recalled ELL parent participation is lower than non-ELL parents. T5 believes the participation for both groups of parents is the same because he has fewer ELL students compared to non-ELL students. There is an imbalance in the relationship between ELL parents and school educators.

An imbalance manifested as accessibility barriers, a perceived hierarchy system, and deemed deception. Seven participants believed barriers imposed upon parents limit their engagement in school. The most common barrier noted was the information communicated to parents in their home language. ESL1 explains, "right before school started, we had a ninth-grade orientation…we had maybe 150 students participating…and of those 150 students, I think there was one ELL family" (*l*51). She was unsure if the school sent out the information in Spanish for the ELL families. ESL4 believed the disparity between ELL parent engagement and non-ELL parent engagement stems from information both groups receive. ESL4 stated that non-ELL parents

> unrelentingly get the information they need about events and policies in their language and the modes of communication that they're most comfortable with…there's not a good faith effort made to ensure that at least the most spoken languages of ELL parents. (*l*54)

ESL4 also noted there is a Spanish website for the school division, but "posts are often times days after the event" (*l*54).

GC1 perceived parents' socioeconomics as a barrier to school participation. She believed parents do the best they can with the resources that they have. GC1 stated,

> Parents work multiple jobs…they are undocumented…there is retribution…they are sometimes afraid to come up to the school…they are afraid to do things because they may not have a particular ID to come to the school. It can be troublesome, and that can be problematic. (*l*56)

T1 noted a perceived hierarchy as a barrier. She felt parents "view me in a higher hierarchy than where they are" (T1, *l*59). T1 is concerned that parents do not view her as a partner in their children's education. From her perspective, she tried to share that they are a team and have a large say in their child's education. Parents try to please or say whatever they think will make her happy, "so that's probably my biggest barrier" (T1, *l*59).

GC2 perceived ELL parents as having a lower level of engagement and found ELL parents to be deceptive. She noted examples of deception:

> Who we think is a parent…is [actually] a sibling, or it is someone they live with… it's not really a parent, so there is some prevarication as relates to who the parent is. When we ask them to come, they'll come to school. They will if you have them there. But the level of deception is very high because it could be a sister. It could be a brother. They could be non-related. (*l*57)

As a graduation coach, GC2 makes home visits. Regarding her work, she stated ELL parents–

> Tend to drop off groups of kids in the name of cousins when they are not really cousins, and I know from doing home visits… that when calling home, I can hold a whole

> conversation when I start talking about something that involves something that's legal like attendance they immediately utter, ‘no, no comprendo, or they hang up, so they have a very bad habit of being disrespectful as well to us when we're trying to communicate basic communication. (GC2, *l*57)

GC2 and T2 reported ELL parent involvement in events outside of the classroom. GC2 also noted that parents are more visible at athletic events, such as soccer, than at academic events. T2 explained,

> I probably met maybe a small handful of parents when they would come in for Open House or Parent-Teacher Conference, or something like that…parents come to support our fine arts, such as orchestra concerts and chorus concerts. (T2, *l*60)

Most of the teachers in the focus group interviewed believed ELL parents' participation in school is a lower rate than non-ELL parents. While teachers perceived ELL parents’ participation as lower, they shared several reasons for a lower participation rate. There is a perceived hierarchy, economic factors influence participation, and parents not being properly notified of school events.

Table 6

Perception of ELL Parent Participation Compared to Non-ELL Parent Participation

Participant	Lower	Higher	Same	Unable to Determine
ESL1	X			
ESL2				X
ESL3	X			
ESL4	X			
ESL5	X			
GC1	X			

GC2	X		
GC3	X		
T1	X		
T2	X		
T3	X		
T4	X		
T5		X	
T6	X		

Focus Group Interview Question 5

What resources, including professional development, are available from the school to help aid ELL parent engagement, communication, or involvement? Interview question 5 asked participants about the resources that are available and their responses are documented in Table 7. Nearly 42% of participants noted the phone interpretation service as a resource provided by the school. Half of the participants in the study found that they did not have access to professional development to aid in ELL parent engagement, communication, or involvement other than the over-the-phone translating service. ESL1 believed the school division's ESL department is not helpful "in providing any sort of professional development or resources for teachers (*l*67). ESL5 held ELL professional development at her school for new teachers. Two ESL teachers noted they could offer professional development at a faculty meeting if they are offered the opportunity. ESL4 noted the school division's focus is "more centered on compliance and keeping the ELL staff up to speed on their caseload than strategies for keeping up for engaging with parents might be" (*l*70). She continued by explaining,

> You know the professional development that's available to the school from the district does not empower the staff at large on how to best involve parents and support students,

> and so it just exacerbates this idea that the ELL students and their parents are completely the responsibility of the teachers. (ESL4, *l*72)

ESL4 shared with the interviewer that ESL1 is currently facilitating a professional development series at her school site to empower teachers with strategies to contact parents.

While ESL teachers hold the division ESL department responsible for the lack of professional development, content teachers and graduation coaches perceived ESL teachers are responsible for not offering professional development and being fluent in Spanish. GC1 responded, “our current ESL teacher does not speak Spanish, so that creates a barrier in itself” (*l*72). GC1 shared that her school has bilingual employees that are readily helpful in providing language support for ELL families.

Participants in the study acknowledged a need for increased resources to help them engage with families. The phone interpretation service is the only resource shared with the interviewer. While many participants noted a decline in professional development offerings since the school closed in March 2020, ESL teachers and content teachers differed as to who was responsible for the decline in offerings. ESL teachers perceived the division had not offered any professional development. Content teachers and graduation coaches perceived that ESL teachers had not offered any professional development sessions.

Table 7

Perception of Resources Available to Teachers to Engage ELL Parents

Participant	No professional development	School-level PD	Phone interpretation service	No resources
ESL1			X	
ESL2				X
ESL3			X	

ESL4	X		
ESL5	X		
GC1	X		
GC2	X		
GC3			X
T1	X		
T2	X		
T3			X
T4			X
T5			X
T6	X		

Focus Group Interview Question 6

Can you tell me about a situation that required communication between you and an ELL parent? What was the outcome? A theme that arose from communication was educators fostered a relationship with parents despite a negative encounter, creating school-home relationships with parents. Central office staff contacted ESL1 because of an incident that occurred at school with a student at the end of the school day. The school administrator put the student on the bus and did not contact the parent. ESL1 shared,

> And so, I believe that had the administration kept the student back and made a phone call to the parents, the parents would have been more than happy to come to pick the student up, and it could have alleviated a lot of miscommunication that happened between the family and the parents. But the student went home and told their family what happened. (ESL1, *l*83)

ESL1 believed the incident *snowballed* because the parents contacted the ESL office, and the family engagement specialist reached out to ESL1, “so by the time it got back to me, it was an issue that was significantly exacerbated” (*l*83).

The parents expressed their feelings about the incident and felt the school heard them. The school explained how they would keep the student safe in school. ESL1 further explained,

> The parents now have our phone numbers and emails for all of us. They were relieved. They felt more comfortable sending their student to the school because they were very concerned. They're like, I'm sending my child here, and my child gets injured. Nobody calls me like this is a huge, huge issue, and we were very sympathetic to that. The parents have every right to feel the way, and…So all of that could have been alleviated. I feel like simply calling them as soon as the incident happened and speaking to her about it in their home language. So, it's key. (ESL1, *l*83)

ESL5 recalled an incident that occurred, and no one notified the parents. Students vandalized the restroom. ESL5 stated,

> Everyone who was in there [was] taken to the principal by security and written up…everyone was sent home…no one called the parents to explain the situation… One of the student’s guardians was very angry and came up to the school, and no one would give her a real answer about what happened…no one was able to explain what happened and why her student was suspended for a day. I could hear her concerns more than anything else. (ESL5, *l*87)

ESL5 continued by sharing,

> I guess the result of that is more that I was able to build somewhat of a relationship with that guardian. And she speaks English, but also someone that I now know if I have an issue with that student or a concern, I don't wait. I can call her if I see in his chart that there's an issue in another class. I will contact that teacher and say, hey, don't pass go, don't collect your two hundred dollars. Just call home, his aunt wants to hear about it, whatever the problem is, and she can talk to him. We can figure out what's going on, but I think that was the main, you know, the positive out of it. (ESL5, *l*87)

T2 shared with the interviewer that the communication between the school and home has improved over the years. In the early years, the school did not have a way to communicate with families. She recalled having to translate for the school when a student brought a knife to school.

> There were knives in school, I would have to call the parents and explain that, you know, [student name] brought a knife to school, and you know we can't have knives in school, and it's actually illegal, and then we went all the way to Tribunal, and his parents were there, and you know I was able to translate so that they could understand the process…And that was well. (T2, *l*92)

T2 also indicated that the student did graduate from high school, stating,

> We were able to engage with him and multiple other students to get them involved in soccer. So then, once we got them involved in the soccer team, they had to maintain a 2.0 [GPA]. Then, suddenly, the school became important to them so that they could play soccer. Then we did a lot of communication, and that way, we saw the parents come to the games. And so, then, the rapport was built. [The students] are bright…[they] just don’t know English, and so really working with the parents to try to get them to see their

> kid is special. We see that they're special. We're going to give them all the resources that we possibly can, and the parents sometimes are like, okay, we're too busy, we're working multiple jobs, or parents will just be like super grateful because they worked hard to get their child here. (T2, *l*92)

Focus Group Interview Question 7

Are there any barriers that hinder you from engaging, communicating, and involving parents of ELL students? Interview Question 7 focused on perceived barriers hindering teachers from engaging with ELL parents. The responses are shown in Table 8. Time and outdated parent contact are two themes that developed as barriers to engaging, communicating, and involving ELL parents. While participants recognized the importance of speaking with parents, the time and effort to communicate with parents are often overwhelming. GC1 noted the "first barrier will be actually being able to reach them" (*l*104). She noted often there are–

> Incorrect phone numbers and incorrect addresses…even if you, you know, go above and beyond to venture out to do home visits, it's not the correct address, and our school district does nothing about parents that enroll students with the incorrect address. (GC1, *l*104)

T4 noted,

> It is a very specific act to create things and translate them and send them out or communicate, and I know that if I'm speaking freely. I don't mean for that to be an excuse, but I just know that time is definitely a factor. (*l*104)

ESL1 believed the lack of correct numbers for ELL parents contributes to time not being well spent. ESL1 stated,

> I feel like these parents change phone numbers constantly, and because maybe of their distrust of the school or not understanding the policies and procedures, they do not come to the school to change the phone number. So, then we try to call home, and other teachers try to call home, and that number is no longer valid. (ESL, *l*99)

ESL2 perceived the time it takes to get in contact with parents as a barrier. He noted his success rate of calling and reaching parents with the over-the-phone translating service is 30% stating,

> If we could guarantee that we were going to get a parent on the phone when we picked up the phone, more teachers would be apt to do that [call]. Because every time you think about making a call, that might be a failure, and it's going to suck twelve minutes of your time on hold. (ESL2, *l*100)

In addition to not having accurate numbers, ESL3 and ESL4 noted the school division's translation service as a barrier. ESL3 commented, "I've been using [the over-the-phone translating service] and have been a little confused by what the translator has said. It didn't seem completely accurate, and later I found out that it wasn't completely accurate" (*l*101).

ESL4 is fluent in several languages but has been a part of conference calls that used the school division's over-the-phone translating service. ESL4 stated,

> There are a few exceptions for which I will not translate into Spanish. I'm not a Heritage speaker, nor do I know legalese or medical Spanish… so particularly in special education situations, although I've asked to be present, I will not be the interpreter. And so, just

> listening to the interpreter service on the line as they're doing what you know is our protocol. It's hard for me not to cringe at some of the translation or interpretation errors that we hear. (*l*102)

Another major barrier among participants were ELL parents and student value of education, which led to deception. T2 noted,

> Some students go to grade school in their country then they stop. They come to the United States "with a second and third-grade education. We're trying to somehow build up that deficit, and then their parents don't see any value to that, so if they come to school for a couple of days…then they're going to be gone for the rest of the time. (*l*108)

The deception was also noted when ELL students enrolled. GC1 has witnessed parents enroll students of the incorrect age. For example, "the parent would say the student is sixteen and come to find out the student is twenty enrolling from another country" (*l*104). GC2 believed parents are deceptive because parents are undocumented and fear the school will report the family. "I've been to home visits to check on students. The parent will try telling me the student has been in school, but I know the student hasn't been in school" (GC2, *l*105).

ESL5 believes parents are unaware of their rights. "I think a barrier for our parents preventing them from being engaged is that they do not know their rights" (ESL5, *l*103). They are unaware they have the right to translation services when contacting the school. She recalled when she contacted her parents, and the person who usually accompanied them to the school was no longer available. The parent believed she could not come to the school because they did not speak the language. ESL5 continued, stating,

> How do we teach parents their rights when we're trying to teach their kids English and get them adjusted to a new school, a new school system? I think that one of the major barriers to parent engagement is a lack of awareness of their rights and expectations of the school system in the United States. (*l*103)

Overall, participants noted four barriers inhibiting parent participation. The most prominent barrier was time. Almost all participants shared that the lack of time hindered them from fully involving their parents. The second most agreed-on barrier was parents not being aware of their rights. Finally, participants noted outdated parent contact and parents' value of education as barriers.

Table 8

Perceived Barriers by Participants

Participant	Outdated parent contact	Time	Value of education	Parents unaware of rights and responsibilities
ESL1	X			
ESL2		X		
ESL3	X	X		X
ESL4		X		X
ESL5		X		X
GC1	X	X	X	X
GC2	X	X	X	X
GC3	X	X	X	X
T1		X	X	
T2		X	X	
T3		X		
T4		X		
T5		X		
T6		X		

Focus Group Interview Question 8

What resources do you need to help you engage, communicate, and involve ELL parents? Interview Question 8 captured teachers' perceptions of the resources they need to engage with ELL parents. The responses are shown in Table 9. Time was a theme that continued from the previous questions. ESL teacher participants suggested time as a valuable resource to support ELL students and their parents. ESL3 shared with the researcher, "I realized that you could not stretch a clock; that's impossible. The only way to create more time is to give more personnel or fewer responsibilities. That way, we would have the time to do what we're supposed to do" (*l*117). ESL2 believed she could be too new to identify adequate resources but agreed "time would be a big one" (*l*116).

ESL4 believed that an organizational structure that allowed for more human resources would allow time for all staff. ESL4 stated,

> We would have more time and energy to have initiatives at the building level, department, or district level to better involve the parents at the building level. We need someone that we can lean on other than the ESL [Assistant Principal] for the building. (*l*118)

GC1 believed an ELL parent education session before ELL enrollment would familiarize parents with the U.S. education system, stating,

> Some of our students come from Honduras or Columbia, and you know they're coming from other parts of the world where [the] school is completely or vastly different. So I think the best thing we can do is equip them with information on how school works before they enroll so then they can make the decision for themselves. (GC1, *l*120)

When sharing what resources are needed, GC1 not only noted a pre-enrollment education conference for parents but also noted the realignment of the ELL organization structure. As a graduation coach at School Site 2, she observed the structure of another program at the school site that supports French students. GC2 further explained,

> We have this French American program that is completely set apart where students speak French, and they have French teachers, and they, you know, they get a French education. You need to speak French, and they learn French, and they, you know, learn English, and they get their high school American diploma, and while still preserving, you know, some of their heritage. If we can do that for them, why wouldn't we be able to do that for our Hispanic population? I think [ELL students] should be provided the same resources. (l121)

Half of the content teachers noted a positive opportunity to engage with ELL parents as a needed resource, such as a parent involvement night. T4 shared, “sometimes, if you don't speak the language of the majority, then it's tough to feel just comfortable, and we want our parents to feel comfortable. Creating that welcoming environment is necessary” (T4, *l*126).

Two ESL teachers believed the school division needs to have culturally responsive professional development sessions for all staff at the building level and division levels. One participant stated,

> I think a culturally responsive PD [professional development] for all personnel would be extremely helpful. And you got to include office staff and cafeteria workers…anyone who's involved with students or parents should be part of this culturally responsive PD.

> And also maybe informing those staff members of what these parents' rights are (ESL1, *l*115)

Overall, participants noted four needed resources. The number one resource was human resources. Participants believed having more human resources would allow them more time to involve ELL parents. Human resources are needed as onsite translators and additional content, and ESL teachers. Other needed resources included staff development and parent engagement night.

Table 9

Resources Needed as Perceived by Participants

Participant	Staff professional development	Time	Human resources	Parents engagement night
ESL1	X			X
ESL2		X		
ESL3		X	X	
ESL4		X	X	
ESL5	X		X	
GC1	X		X	X
GC2	X	X		
GC3			X	
T1		X	X	
T2			X	X
T3			X	
T4			X	X
T5		X	X	
T6			X	

Data Summary

The data collected for this qualitative study were collected from focus group interviews. Fourteen educators from two different schools located in one school division participated in one of three focus group interviews. Many participants believed ELL students are the responsibility of all educators in the school. Teachers have access to a limited number of resources and desire more professional development sessions. Teachers believed more staff was needed. Additional staff would allow ESL teachers to collaborate more with content teachers. Bilingual staff would allow for timely translation services. Participants in the study used various methods to involve parents, including making home visits, using social media apps, and calling home.

Chapter Five: Findings, Implications, Summary, and Conclusion

English Language Learners are the fastest-growing population of students in U.S. public schools, especially in urban schools (Li & Peters, 2020). Compared to other subgroups, ELL students' academic performance and graduation rates are lower (Cook et al., 2012). The purpose of this study was to identify perceived strategies urban high school teachers use to involve ELL parents and to identify whether perceived barriers exist. The perception of teachers, specifically graduation coaches, ESL teachers, and content teachers, could provide insight for educators and school leaders as they work to enhance the educational experience and communication with ELL parents. Parental involvement can have a positive trajectory on student academic performance (Wilder, 2014). The focus group interview questions were designed to answer the two research questions:

1. What are English Language Learners' teachers' perceptions of the parent involvement strategies educators in urban public schools use to involve Hispanic ELL parents?
2. What do teachers of English Language Learners perceive as potential barriers to engaging and involving Hispanic ELL parents?

Summary of Findings

The findings presented in this study were based on data collected from in-depth focus group interviews. Content teachers, Graduation Coaches, and ESL teachers participated in focus group interviews. There are seven distinct findings that emerged from the focus-group interviews.

Discussion of Findings

Finding One

Teachers varied in their beliefs as to who is responsible for ELL students at their school. As shown in Table 3, 71% (10 out of 14) of participants, including all the ESL teachers and graduation coaches, believed teachers, school counselors, graduation coaches, and administrators are responsible for the ELL students. Two-thirds of the content teachers responded differently. Half of the teachers who teach ELL students noted ESL teachers are responsible for ELL students, while one teacher specifically noted ESL teachers and school counselors are responsible for ELL students. While many participants believed all staff is responsible for ELL students, they also noted that the responsibility often falls on the ESL teacher. Participants in both school sites participating in this study noted there was at least one school counselor or assistant principal designated to support the needs of ELL students.

The results of educators' feedback on this question are similar to Song's (2016) study of systematic professional development training. Song examined the impact on teachers' attitudes toward teaching ELL students. The results of the current study were similar to Song's results. Most educators in both studies did not perceive ELL students as the sole responsibility of the ESL teacher. In Song's study, 89.6% (43 out of 48) of content-teacher participants believed teaching ELL students was the responsibility of the content teacher. Ten percent (5 out of 48) of the participants believed that teaching ELL students are not the content teachers' responsibility but rather the ESL teacher's responsibility. According to Stepanek et al. (2010), principals must develop and communicate a vision for improving ELL instruction and services.

Finding Two

Teachers perceived ELL parent participation in school as lower than non-ELL parents. Almost 86% (12 out of 14) of participants shared that ELL parents participate in their child's schooling at a lower rate than non-ELL parents. The data are captured in Table 6. Participants noted that it is easier for non-ELL parents to participate in their children's school because the resources are available in their language and are advertised in the way they want to receive them. GC1 noted some parents experience economic restraints that prevent them from fully emerging in the educational experience. Moreover, T1 noted a perceived hierarchy on behalf of the parents that inhibit parents from fully engaging with teachers. Because of this perceived hierarchy, parents seldom reject or disagree with the teacher.

Schools can complicate the practicality of their resources by providing quality resources that are not translated into parents' home language (Wassell et al., 2017). Spanish-speaking parents may be unable to read resources in English, thus making the resource counterproductive. As Good et al. (2010) noted, ELL parents, especially those new to the U.S. school systems, face high stress and emotional upheaval. Parents are presented with financial concerns as they work low-wage jobs. Families may not have their traditional support systems available to them. A perceived sense of hierarchy when it comes to ELL parents and educators was also found in Shim's (2018) study of ELL parental involvement in rural areas. Findings in Shim's research noted that ELL parents fear negative repercussions. Parents perceived an indirect feeling of intimidation. They believed it was better to stay quiet to make educators happy (Shim, 2018).

Finding Three

Teachers perceived that meeting parents where they are can be beneficial for parents. As shown in Table 5, almost 93% (13 out of 14) of teachers utilized strategies to engage ELL parents. Close to 57% (8 out of 14) of teachers perceived meeting parents where they are included in communicating in parents' home language and offering family engagement services. Fifty percent (7 out of 14) of the participants used social media or email as means of communicating. Social media is a tool that is used by many participants to engage, communicate, and involve ELL parents. Email, text, and other messaging apps used to send communications across the internet are the primary sources of social media. Nearly 43% (6 out of 14) of participants used traditional forms of communication, such as face-to-face meetings and phone calls. Some respondents noted getting parents to the building is key. Once they come to the school building, then parents can see that educators care. This builds trust between home and school (ESL4, *l*38).

Trust in a family and school relationship is having faith that the other person will act to sustain the relationship and achieve a positive outcome for the student (Clark et al., 2009). School leaders can support the success of ELL students by building a bridge with families. ELL students learn best when there is a link between home, school, and the community. One strategy is for school leaders to build two-way communication with parents (Stepanek et al., 2010). Many types of relationships exist in the school community. The dynamic in each relationship is paramount to children, whether it is between parents and children, teachers and children, parents and teachers, school and communities, and families. Children are at the center of the system.

Parents and teachers communicating openly and freely establish the core of the relationships (Clarke et at., 2009).

Finding Four

Teachers perceived ELL parents are more trusting of school educators when the school and community partner to hold events off the school site. As shared in Table 5, 80% (4 out of 5) of ESL teachers and 33% (1 out of 3) of graduation coaches recalled building substantial teacher-parent relationships through community outreach. While the program was composed of ESL teachers and a community police officer, the program was held off-site at a local faith-based organization. The community police officer is Hispanic, and the ESL teachers are fluent Spanish speakers. The church is comprised of a diverse population. The ESL teachers were able to garner ELL parents' trust. The ESL teachers believed parents felt comfortable asking questions. The human resources available to the parents were either Hispanic or fluent in Spanish. ESL teachers believe this helped with connecting with the parents. This level of trust led parents to contact the same group of ESL teachers for support at other times. The program opened a door for parents and ESL teachers. Further examples of trust are illustrated when graduation coaches and ESL teachers partner to make home visits to parents. Educators believe parents appreciate their efforts to reach them at home and sometimes at work.

As shown by Lee et al. (2012), schools' commitment to families has a great impact on Spanish-speaking Latino parents. Latino parents are more involved in their children’s education when schools are committed to actively engaging parents in activities. Principals can maximize communication with parents by using community liaisons or interpreters as a resource for school

personnel to use to communicate with parents in their home language. Having bilingual staff available is also helpful for ELL parents (Stepanek et al., 2010).

Finding Four is also aligned with Rutledge et al. (2015) study of the characteristics of high-performing schools. In high-performing schools, educators are concerned about students' social and emotional side of schooling. They make deliberate efforts to connect with students. Immigrant Latino parents may prefer off-site venues, such as religious organizations, community organizations, and social networks, to learn more about the resources available to their children (Poza et al., 2014).

Finding Five

Teachers perceived time and outdated contact information as barriers to engaging, communicating, and involving ELL parents. In the study, 93% (13 out of 14) of participants noted time as a barrier for teachers to communicate with ELL parents. This data were represented in Table 8. Educators have a legal obligation to communicate with ELL parents in their home language. The school division uses an over-the-phone translating service for teachers and school staff to speak with non-English speaking families. Participants in the study noted the process was not as smooth as they hoped it would be. It takes time to get an interpreter on the phone. The phone call is often long because the interpreter must translate back and forth. In addition, the school may have an incorrect phone number for the student because parents often do not notify teachers or the school of a new phone number.

Overall, participants expressed frustration with using the over-the-phone translating service, coupled with outdated contact information. Nearly 36% (5 out of 14) of participants perceived parents outdated contact information impacted their time. ESL2 shared he had a 30%

success rate using the over-the-phone translating service, “When you think about making a call that will be a failure, that takes about 12 minutes of your time on hold” (*l*100). T4 shared, “teachers have a lot to do, and it is not an excuse, but time is a factor” (*l*110).

Researchers have stressed the importance of building relationships with families through strong, clear communication. Wassel et al. (2017) noted that some resources could complicate communications. School leaders who provide detailed information on school websites, distribute newsletters, and other forms of communications not translated into parents’ home language make the resources complicated. This creates a barrier for some parents. Unlike previous research, this study revealed teachers perceived time as a barrier for them to communicate and engage with ELL parents.

Finding Six

Teachers perceived parents being unaware of their rights are barriers to engaging, communicating, and involving ELL parents. As shown in Table 8, close to 43% (6 out of 14) of the educators in the study perceived that parents were unaware of their rights and the resources available to them. Parents need to know the resources the school division has to help parents navigate their child in school. All participants are aware of the over-the-phone translating service available to school staff to communicate with parents. However, parents may be unaware that they have the right to translation services through the over-the-phone translating service. ESL5 shared that when she contacts families, they will say the person who normally translated for them is no longer available. Parents would say that their interpreter may have moved or just cannot come to the school with the parent anymore.

Parents being unaware of their rights consequently affects parents not connecting with the school and advocating for their children. In their study of educational practices that restrict ELL students, Kanno et al. (2014) found that parents did not advocate for their student's classes and acquiesced to the recommendation of the school. Parents did not know they had a say in their child's course selection, despite it being a school policy. In Isik-Ercan's (2012) study of refugee families, he noted that the lack of resources and strategies was a reason why parents in his study disconnected from the school. Specifically, translators were only provided during parent-teacher conferences or other school events.

Finding Seven

Teachers perceived that human resources, professional development, and resources to inform parents are needed to enhance ELL student outcomes. Each group shared their perception of the resources needed to help teachers engage, communicate, and involve ELL parents. The resources can be classified into two categories: human resources and professional development designed for parent outreach. In Table 9, 79% (11 out of 14) of participants noted human resources as a need. Human resources came in the form of extra staffing. Three ESL teachers noted the demands required to engage ELL parents appropriately required more time than they had. School leaders can reduce teachers' workload to allow them more opportunities to engage with families. More ESL staff is needed to reduce the teacher-student ratio. In addition, three of the content teachers stated full-time interpreters are needed at each school to assist parents and teachers with translation.

Respondents noted there are no professional developments available or resources. Forty-three percent (6 out of 14) noted the over-the-phone translating service as a resource for

communicating with parents. The over-the-phone translating service is a service the school division pays for all employees to use to communicate with families. Other participants noted professional developments before schools closed in March 2020 for the pandemic.

Fifty-seven percent of participants (8 out of 14) noted information resources in the form of professional development for staff and parents are needed. Information for parents varied based on the role of the participants. All graduation coaches at both schools noted a need to have an intense information session for parents enrolling their children from another country. The most powerful resource for parents enrolling their students from another school is information. They need to know how school works in the United States, along with school expectations. This knowledge about school included guiding them through parent platforms provided by the district and informing parents of their rights. Another form of information as a resource for ELL parents' is a parent engagement night to get families involved. Professional development for staff included culturally responsive training for all staff who interacted with ELL students and parents, including custodians and cafeteria workers.

Prior research suggested that if schools can provide the financial and human resources that are needed to offer parents more support and outreach, then ELL parent involvement will increase (Niehaus et al., 2014). School support includes interpreters, translated documents, parent outreach activities, and other services such as transportation or childcare. Likewise, Poza et al. (2014) suggested there is a need to have translators in schools to interpret for families. Having bilingual staff available is also helpful for ELL parents (Stepanek et al., 2010). Increased financial support extends to educators as funding is needed to support teacher development. Teachers who teach ELL students suggest there should be a greater focus on ELL students’

needs and increased professional development on how to address their needs (Okhremtchouk et al., 2019). Principals must provide time, money, and resources for teachers to learn more about ELL students (Stufft et al., 2011).

Finding Eight

Teachers are aware of policies and practices at the school division has to communicate with ELL parents. As shown in Table 4, 93% (13 out of 14) of participants responded that the school division has a practice or policy regarding ELL students. Eighty-six percent (12 out of 14) participants recognized the phone interpretation service as a division practice or policy. ESL teachers advocated for content teachers and graduation coaches to use the service with fidelity.

Although one teacher did not recall a practice or policy related to ELL students, none of the teachers or graduation coaches in the study acknowledged the Family Engagement Specialist or family engagement night as practices or policies. However, all ESL teachers acknowledged the division's Family Engagement Specialist or family engagement night as practices related to ELL parent communication or involvement.

In 2015, The Office of Civil Rights published guidance that school divisions must follow. Schools must communicate information to ELL parents in a language that they understand (U.S. Department of Education (n.d.-f). Schools must provide translated materials or a language interpreter. Educators must keep the interests of ELL students at the forefront of policy and practice discussions. Principals communicate a clear vision for the school that focuses on high expectations for ELL students (Tung et al., 2011)

Summary of Findings

The findings presented in this study were based on data collected from in-depth focus group interviews. Content teachers, Graduation Coaches, and ESL teachers participated in focus group interviews. Many of the findings from this study were aligned with previous research studies. For instance, Good et al. (2010) study noted the difference in ELL parents' home language and the school's language as a barrier. Whereas in this study, participants perceived time as a barrier. The lack of time inhibited their abilities to fully engage and involve parents.

Implications for Practice

Implication One

School leaders should hold a professional development session to clearly define the roles of each individual supporting the education of ELL students and inform educators of the established practices and policies for ELL student and parent support. This implication is associated with Finding One and Finding Eight. Better means of communication and clearly defining the expectations of all educators could help educators understand their role in educating ELL students. Education leaders should raise awareness surrounding the shared sense of responsibility for educating ELL students and engaging and communicating with them and their families. The principal should communicate the vision for ELL student outcomes.

Implication Two

School leaders should follow the recommendations from The Office of Civil Rights and communicate with parents in their home language. School leaders should work to find more efficient ways to communicate with parents in their home language, as indicated by Finding Two. School leaders should employ translators at each school to allow for more efficient and effective communication with parents. While the school division has translator services, all

staff should be made aware of the service. The service is needed at the teacher level to ensure that teacher-level publications are available and accessible to parents and students.

Implication Three

School leaders should aim to employ more educators that are representative of ELL students. It is imperative that parents and students see themselves represented in the school. This implication is associated with Finding Four. ESL teachers noted more parent participation when the community partnered to hold events offsite. The event leaders either spoke Spanish or were Hispanic. Having Spanish-speaking teachers and teachers who were former ELL students could build trust and confidence in the school because these adults could possibly relate to the experiences of parents and students.

Implication Four

School leaders should foster partnerships with community and faith-based organizations to provide additional family engagement activities. This implication is associated with Findings Three and Four. Educators in this study perceived ELL parents are more susceptible to partnering with educators at off-site locations. Effective school partnerships create a pathway for more resources for ELL students and parents. The school should provide multiple opportunities for families to engage with the school. This includes open house and ELL family engagement nights. Schools should recognize the various ways in which parents can involve themselves with the school and differentiate engagement activities. One way to differentiate activities is to be cognitive of parents' schedules and create meeting times that are conducive to working parents’ schedules.

Implication Five

School leaders should find ways to alleviate time as a barrier. This will require school leaders to develop more efficient methods of addressing the language barrier. Suggestions include employing translators at the school so that they are readily available and employing more ESL teachers to allow ESL teachers to collaborate with other teachers on best practices. Associated with Finding Five, study participants acknowledged that while they have an over-the-phone translating service, the time used to establish contact makes it ineffective. Educators want faster means to communicate with parents that are not as timely. The school division can employ more people to ensure the timely translation of classroom teachers' communications to the parents. The Office of Civil Rights mandates that "schools must communicate information in a language they can understand about any program, service, or activity that is called to the attention of parents who are proficient in English" (U.S. Department of Education, n.f.).

Implication Six

School leaders should institute an orientation for ELL parents that allows them to become familiar with the school structure, expectations, and their rights and responsibilities as a parent. As associated with Finding Six, study participants perceived parents transitioning from other countries might need to be educated on the U.S. public school systems. School leaders should be forthcoming with the expectations imposed in the U.S. public school systems. Teachers want to ensure that parents know what resources are available to them from the school.

Implication Seven

School leaders should offer specific professional development opportunities for all educators aimed at fostering school-family relationships with ELL parents. As indicated by Finding Seven, all staff could benefit from culturally responsive professional development. Principals will need to break down barriers and push teachers and other staff members beyond their boundaries to work together.

Implication Eight

School leaders should survey their staff to seek feedback on the resources they need to perform their responsibilities and seek funding opportunities to provide the resources to educators. As indicated by Finding Seven, the school division needs additional funding or to reallocate its funding to provide additional staff to support ELL students. Providing additional staff with lessen the workload of current staff members and create more opportunities to meet the needs of EL students. School divisions should utilize grants to gander more resources.

Suggestions for Future Studies

This study focused on two schools in the same school division in eastern Virginia. The participants in the study were content teachers who taught ELL students, graduation coaches, and ESL teachers. The school sites in the study had the highest number of high school ELL enrollment in the school division. Further studies are necessary to help school leaders create, sustain, and monitor successful parental involvement in academic outcomes for ELL students. Future studies could research the family engagement practices school in more diverse areas in Virginia used to engage families compared to areas with a lesser ELL student population. Since

this study consisted of 14 participants, enlarging the number of participants could uncover areas for growth and celebrations in the school division.

Personal Reflections

The dissertation journey has provided me with a framework of best practices successful schools use to keep parents of ELL students engaged in the schooling process. As I was on the ground interacting and overseeing the instructional program of the school, I was surprised to learn the actual number of ELL students at each school. The actual number was far from what I perceived. The content teachers in my study were mostly ninth and tenth-grade teachers. The population of ELL students seems to be more diverse as they go up in grade levels. Overall, the teacher group had less knowledge of school practices and available resources compared to graduation coaches and ESL teachers. In summary, the dissertation journey has stretched me in a way I did not know was possible.

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Appendix A

CITI Training Certificate

CITI PROGRAM

Completion Date 23-Jan-2022
Expiration Date 22-Jan-2025
Record ID 38308186

This is to certify that:

Tori Jacobs-Sumbry

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

Social & Behavioral Research
(Curriculum Group)
Social & Behavioral Research
(Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University (Virginia Tech)

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wca774878-1974-4b26-b288-e455dc93b4b2-38308186

Appendix B

Institutional Review Board Approval

VIRGINIA TECH.

Division of Scholarly Integrity and Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board
North End Center, Suite 4120 (MC 0497)
300 Turner Street NW
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
540/231-3732
irb@vt.edu
http://www.research.vt.edu/sirc/hrpp

MEMORANDUM

DATE:	September 20, 2022
TO:	Ted S Price, Tori Alicia Jacobs-Sumbry
FROM:	Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572)
PROTOCOL TITLE:	A Qualitative Study Investigating Teachers’ Perceptions of Strategies Used to Engage English Language Learners Parents in Urban High Public Schools
IRB NUMBER:	22-790

Effective September 19, 2022, the Virginia Tech Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) determined that this protocol meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review under 45 CFR 46.104 (d) category(ies) 2(ii).

Ongoing IRB review and approval by this organization is not required. This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities impact the exempt determination, please submit an amendment to the HRPP for a determination.

This exempt determination does not apply to any collaborating institution(s). The Virginia Tech HRPP and IRB cannot provide an exemption that overrides the jurisdiction of a local IRB or other institutional mechanism for determining exemptions.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at:

https://secure.research.vt.edu/external/irb/responsibilities.htm

(Please review responsibilities before beginning your research.)

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Determined As:	**Exempt, under 45 CFR 46.104(d) category(ies) 2(ii)**
Protocol Determination Date:	**September 19, 2022**

ASSOCIATED FUNDING:

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this protocol, if required.

Appendix C

Information Sheet for Participation in a Research Study

Principal Investigator: Ted Price

IRB# and Title of Study: IRB # 22-790 A Qualitative Study Investigating Teachers' Perceptions of Strategies Used to Engage English Language Learners Parents in Urban High Public Schools

Sponsor: N/A

You are invited to participate in a research study. This form includes information about the study and contact information if you have any questions.

I am a graduate student at Virginia Tech, and I am conducting this research as part of my coursework.

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW?

If you decide to participate in this study, you will complete an interview. *As part of the study, you will participate in a focus group interview using zoom. The researcher will ask you questions relative to your experience as a high school teacher educating English Language Learners. Specifically, the researcher is interested in learning how you and your school community communicate and engage parents of English Language Learners (ELL students). The researcher will collect information on your years of experience teaching ELL students and your overall years in teaching. The focus group interview will be recorded. Your identity will not be revealed in the research. Recording the focus group interview is required and will permit the researcher to accurately capture your response.*

The study should take approximately 45 minutes of your time. We do not anticipate any risks from completing this study.

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise that warrant doing so.

CONFIDENTIALITY

We will do our best to protect the confidentiality of the information we gather from you, but we cannot guarantee 100% confidentiality.

Any data collected during this research study will be kept confidential by the researchers. Your interview will be audio-recorded using a digital recorder and then transcribed. The researchers will code the transcripts using a pseudonym (false name). The recordings will be uploaded to a secure password-protected computer in the researcher's office. The researchers will maintain a list that includes a key to the code. The master key and the recordings will be stored for 3 years after the study has been completed and then destroyed.

WHO CAN I TALK TO?

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Tori Jacobs-Sumbry. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact the Virginia Tech HRPP Office at 540-231-3732 (irb@vt.edu).

Appendix D

Focus Group Protocol

Welcome

Thank you for agreeing to be part of the focus group. I appreciate your willingness to participate. To facilitate our note-taking, I would like to audiotape our conversations today. For your information, only researchers on the project will be privy to the tapes, which will be eventually destroyed after they are transcribed.

Introduction

My name is Tori Jacobs-Sumbry. I am a doctoral candidate at Virginia Tech, and I am conducting focus groups to identify strategies principals and teachers use to engage and involve parents of English Language Learners (ELL students) in the school community. You have been selected to speak with me today because you have been identified as someone who can share information on ELL students' parent engagement. I am trying to learn more about how school communities communicate with and involve ELL parents in their child(ren) education.

Process and Rules

This is in no way an evaluation of the school or any individual. I want you to do the talking and for everyone to participate. I may call on you if I haven't heard from you in a while. The notes taken are strictly for research purposes. There are no right or wrong answers. Everyone's experiences and opinions are important. Speak up if you agree or disagree. Your participation is voluntary, and while the interview is part of the research, your participation will remain anonymous. What we say in this session will stay here. I want you to feel comfortable sharing when sensitive issues come up. The interview is not designed to make you feel uncomfortable; however, if we need to stop at any time, just let me know. Please try to identify yourself by your letter and number each time you speak. I will avoid nodding or any facial expressions or responses during the entire meeting. The interview is designed to last 45 to 60 minutes. Do you have any questions before we begin?

[Note: the researcher will use phrases such as “Tell me more,” “Could you give me an example?”, “Could you explain that?” as prompts to solicit more detailed information when needed.]

Appendix E

Focus Group Interview Questions

In your school, who is responsible for the ELL population?

Can you describe ELL policies and practices at your school?

What strategies do you use to engage, communicate, and involve ELL parents?

How does ELL parents' level of engagement compare to non-ELL parents?

What resources, including professional development, are available from the school to help aid ELL parent engagement, communication, or involvement?

Can you tell me about a situation that required communication between you and an ELL parent? What was the outcome?

Are there any barriers that hinder you from engaging, communicating, and involving ELL parents?

What resources do you need to help you engage, communicate, and involve ELL parents?

Appendix F

Verbal Consent Script

Thank you for responding to my email invitation to participate in a research study.

My name is Tori Jacobs-Sumbry, and I am a Doctoral Candidate at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University conducting this study for my dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Ted Price. The research is being conducted to find out teachers' perceptions of the strategies educators use in urban public high schools to engage and involve Hispanic English Language Learners' parents. Your participation will only be needed once for this interview, which should last 45 to 60 minutes.

This is in no way an evaluation of the school or any individual. The information provided will remain strictly confidential, and you will not be identified by your answers. Data will be compiled as a whole with no individual responses tied to your name or any identifying information about you. All information disclosed during the interview will be kept secure in a locked desk drawer in my home office.

The conservation is being recorded. You may choose not to answer any question. The interview is not designed to make you feel uncomfortable; however, if we need to stop at any time, just let me know

Do you have any questions before we get started? Do I have your permission to begin the interview?

Appendix G

Permission to Conduct Research

September 29, 2022

Ms. Tori Jacobs-Sumbry
Doctoral candidate, Virginia Tech University
[redacted]

Approval is granted to conduct the proposed capstone project, *A Qualitative Study Investigating Teachers' Perceptions of Strategies Used to Engage English Language Learners Parents in Urban High Public Schools*, in fulfillment of the capstone project requirement for the degree of Doctor of Education from Virginia-Tech University. The proposed capstone project meets the technical criteria following the [redacted] and must follow the stipulations below:

- [redacted] will NOT provide the email addresses, nor phone numbers, of the administrators and teachers, at the schools.
- Voluntary participation allows each participant to decide individually whether to participate or withdraw at any time, without question, consequence, or follow-up.
- **All participants, and [redacted] will remain anonymous in data and survey collection, and reporting results**. Identifiable characteristics or linkage to the identity of any individual, school, or school district is prohibited.
- Approval does not constitute commitment of resources or the endorsement of the study or its findings by the school district or the School Board.
- Data collected and results will not become part of any principal, school, or district record. All research records must be locked in a secured location.
- The researcher will email a copy of the final report for the school district, and report any changes or problems while conducting the study, to [redacted]

We look forward to your findings and contribution to instructional practice, program services, and achievement for *ALL* students.

Sincerely,

[redacted]

[redacted]
Email: [redacted]

[redacted]
[redacted]
Email: [redacted]

Appendix H

Solicitation Email to Teacher Participants

Email subject line: Perception of strategies used to involve English language learners' parents in urban schools

Greetings,

My name is Tori Jacobs-Sumbry. I am currently a doctoral candidate pursuing my EdD in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies through Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (VA Tech). I am conducting qualitative research on parents of high school English Language Learners (ELL students) involvement in their child's school. The purpose of this study was to identify perceived strategies urban high school teachers use to involve ELL parents and to identify whether perceived barriers exist.

I am looking for participants for my research. I will be conducting three individual high school principal interviews, three teacher focus group interviews with three to seven teachers in each group who works with ELL students, and one parent focus group with three to seven parents to determine the perception each group has regarding strategies to involve Hispanics ELL students' parents. I am hoping you will participate in my study as the results will be important in addressing potential parental involvement concerns. Before you agree to participate, I can confirm that:

- With your permission, the interview will be recorded.
- Your anonymity will always be maintained, and no comments will be ascribed to you by name in any written document or verbal presentation, nor will any data be used from the interview that might identify you to a third party. You will be free to withdraw from the research at any time.
- A copy of the interview questions will be sent to you seven days before the interview.

I hope that you will help me with my research. If you have any questions concerning the research, feel free to email me. This research has been reviewed by the Human Research Protection Program of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. If you are willing to participate, please respond to this email. Once I hear from you, I will set up an interview that will take approximately 45 minutes.

Respectfully

Tori Jacobs-Sumbry
Virginia Tech

Appendix I

Follow-up Email to Teacher Participants

Email subject line: Perception of strategies used to involve English language learners' parents in in one urban school

Greetings,

I want to thank you in advance for your participation in the research study. The focus group interview will take place on _____ at _____. The interview will last no more than 45 minutes. The interview will focus on your perceptions of the strategies school teachers and principals use to involve Hispanic ELL parents in the school. A copy of the interview questions is attached to this correspondence.

This email serves as confirmation that I received permission from the Assessment, Research, and Accountability department on behalf of the school superintendent to conduct this research. I will record the interview to accurately capture your responses. You will always remain anonymous, and no comments will be ascribed to you by name in written or verbal expressions. Your participation is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw your participation from this study at any time as this study without any adverse effects on your current status.

If you have any questions regarding the nature of the research or are unclear on any aspect of the study, please email me at tajacobs@vt.edu.

Respectfully,

Tori Jacobs-Sumbry
Virginia Tech

Appendix J

Timeline of the Study

Date	Event
August 23, 2022	Submit Proposal to Committee for Approval
August 2022 to September 2022	Edit as recommended
September 2022	Submit a proposal for IRB Approval
September 2022	Submit a proposal to the school district's Research Authorization Committee (RAC)
September 2022	Receive approval from RAC
October 2022	Conduct Pilot Teacher Focus Group Interviews
October 2022 – November 2022	Conduct Teacher Focus Group Interviews
November 2022 to December 2022	Transcribe Focus Group Interviews
December 2022 to January 2023	Complete coding, analysis of data, and conclusion
February 2023	Defend Dissertation