

**Strategies for Supporting Educators and Engaging ELL Families**

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**Abstract**

Parental involvement, or engagement, often plays a crucial role in the ways in which students are successful in their classrooms. Research has shown increased parental involvement and collaboration with teachers lead to higher success rates for students. However, it is not always easy for parents, especially English language learners, to engage in their child's education, due to challenges including economic status, employment, family stressors, unfamiliarity with school engagement, and teachers' lack of preparedness to support culturally and linguistically diverse students. To address this problem, teachers will participate in sessions to become better equipped to support and involve parents in the classroom community. ENL teachers will work alongside them by teaching them strategies and providing them with materials to use in their classrooms to help engage them in the material. Teachers will collect data to share it with colleagues, fostering mutual learning and improvement.

*Keywords:* English as a new language, parental involvement, engagement, strategies, collaborating, peer teaching, stressors, socioeconomic status



## Chapter 1: Introduction

Parental involvement, or engagement, can be defined in many ways. In this thesis capstone project, it is defined as parents working alongside teachers to support their children and help to build a positive attitude towards education within their families (He & Thompson 2022). This project explores the ways in which parental involvement can play a role in children's education in many different areas. These areas can include socially, emotionally, academically, and behaviorally. Developing strategies to involve parents in their children's education can improve student success and promote growth within the classroom. While many teachers implement many successful and effective methods for working alongside parents, some educators need more support when working with ELL. Indeed, many teachers claim to lack support within their districts and believe it would be beneficial to have extra support in this area (Kalayci et al., 2020; Salem et al., 2023). In addition, many stressors such as financial difficulties, work commitments, and cultural or language differences, can affect how families interact with the school community and teachers (Gilbert et al., 2017).

Thus, this project aims to explore strategies to enhance parent engagement, particularly for ELL families. In Chapter 2, I will review the literature investigating the reasons behind teachers' need for more support in effectively teaching ELLs and ways to help teachers address these challenges. Chapter 2 will also highlight teacher's perceptions and the ways in which they believe their knowledge can be expanded in this area. Chapter 3 describes professional development sessions that incorporate some of these strategies to enhance parent engagements in a Longwood school community and positively impact students. These sessions offer teachers opportunity to work alongside co-workers, share ideas, and improve their understanding of engaging ELL parents in the classroom community.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

This Chapter explores several concepts regarding the positive effects of parental involvement in their children's education on their learning experiences. Not only will these studies help to support how parental involvement can support growth in academic areas, but other domains as well. Several studies have concluded that parent involvement can affect not only students' academic improvement but also their behavioral, social and emotional outcomes (e.g., Gilbert et al., 2017; He & Thompson, 2022; Sibley & Brabeck, 2017.). Indeed, parent behaviors directly affect their child's lives, which will inevitably affect their classroom experiences and some of their experiences beyond the classroom environment.

These findings align with the modeling theory (Rymanowicz, 2015) and Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory (SCT). The modeling theory suggests that children learn through observation and therefore imitate the behaviors and attitudes of their parents in regards to education (Rymanowicz, 2015). Children, in all areas learn through observation and following the examples that are set before them, whether it is by their parents or people they spend a lot of time with. Teachers and parent's attitudes towards education can also play a role in their success as well (Giannikas & Nikitaki, 2022; Kalayci & Ergul, 2020). SCT posits that language develops within children through interacting with both peers and adults.

In this Chapter, I first discuss these theories. Next, I explore the themes that have emerged from the literature on PI, including how we, as educators, can partner with parents and communities in order to ensure our educational systems are most effective for the children within these communities. Lack of parental involvement may be related to many risk factors such as low SES, family stressors, depressive symptoms, teacher preparation alongside families, and the strategies and materials being used within the classroom. Each of these different factors directly

impacts the ways in which parents can engage in their child's classroom community and work alongside their teachers.

### **Theoretical Understanding of Parental Involvement**

Parent-school relationships play a role in the success of children inside the classroom. According to the model theory (Ngozwana et al., 2024; Rymanowicz, 2015), when parents demonstrate positive beliefs towards school and encourage and support their children, the children are more likely to adopt similar positive attitudes towards school and achieve success in different areas of their learning. Through modeling behaviors, whether intentionally or unintentionally, children often imitate or copy the behaviors of those around them, especially at younger ages (Rymanowicz, 2015). This is why the ways in which parents discuss or address education as a whole, can play a role in the attitudes and beliefs that students develop once they are at the age of school level.

Relatedly, Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory (SCT) theory argues that language develops within children through interacting with both peers and adults. Through these interactions their language skills will develop, and they will continue to gain an understanding of the language they are learning (Wessel, 2014). Therefore, if a parent is not an English speaker, it can hinder their child's language development. However, even not-fluent parents can still find ways to engage with their children's learning (Rymanowicz, 2015; Salem et al., 2023). For example, Wessel's (2014) research shows that parents can use their background knowledge and understanding to help their children develop an understanding of not only the language, but also the skills being taught.

### **Lack of Parental Involvement and Risk Factors**

Some families may wish to engage in the education of their children but may have barriers or risk factors that prevent them from being able to be fully invested in their academics within the classroom. These risk factors include low SES of ELL families, depressive symptoms and stressors within families (Alt et al., 2016; Gilbert et al., 2017). These stressors can include family depression, economic status, and working families. Such barriers have a potential impact on students' lives and their learning experiences. Also, a lack of awareness of available resources among families can limit their involvement in their child's education and thus affects their academic success.

### **Low SES/Financial Stress of ELL Families**

Research shows a clear association between the socioeconomic status of ELL families and engagement in their children's education. Studies by Gilbert et al. (2017) and He and Thompson (2022) suggest that barriers such as financial stress can significantly detract from a family's ability to engage with their child's education, thus negatively affecting the child's overall well-being and growth across multiple areas. That is, low socioeconomic status is linked to reduced academic performance, a claim further supported by (Sibley & Brabeck, 2017) who found that Latino immigrant children, often from lower SES households, are at a higher risk of experiencing educational disadvantages. Similarly, Alt et al. (2016) found parents who with higher levels of education tend to have children who perform better academically, as measured by tasks like the retell rubric that assesses children's ability to recount a story using vocabulary taught by their teacher. These students were either kindergarten level or second grade level.

This finding is also supported by Gilbert et al. (2017) who found that parental involvement and positive educational attitudes are linked to better student outcomes, including

higher English language proficiency. In their study, third and fourth grade students were given the opportunity to share their experiences in education and what their perspective was on their experiences. Parents were also given the opportunity to share their beliefs in regards to education, which helped researchers to make the connection between parent perspectives and their students' thoughts regarding school and their successes. Results were able to indicate that parents who had a more positive outlook and were more involved in their child's education then had students who had higher English language fluency, as well as more positive outlooks (Gilbert et al., 2017).


Therefore, if a parent went to higher education, they then were placed in a higher economic grouping and were able to more effectively support their children, whether through engagement in their learning, or through being a good example for their students. Through research software and databases, we can see through analyzing language aspects there were lower success levels for students whose families were in a lower socioeconomic status (Gilbert et al., 2017).

Again, this does not necessarily mean that this is the direct result of having a lower education level or more negative views towards education. However, we continue to see similar patterns where parents play a role in the success of their children in the classroom depending on several of these factors. The study by Wee (2020) emphasizes the significant challenges low socioeconomic status families face when attempting to engage in their children's educational activities. More specifically, Wee found that parents encountered had a hard time finding efficient time for them to engage in their child's learning, exacerbated by the necessity for long working hours to support the family. Indeed, such challenges severely can parents' ability to participate in school-related activities. It is also important to note that such issues are not



indicative of parents' lack of interests to engage in their children's education, but rather of significant hurdles impeding their engagement.

### **Depressive Symptoms and Stressors within Families**

 When students come into classrooms, their interaction and behaviors are often and affected by events happening within their families or their homes (He & Thomson, 2022). Generally, families, especially those new to the United States or learning English as a new language., face various stressors. One significant source of stress is the immigration and acculturation process in the United States. Acculturation stress refers to the physiological, emotional, and behavioral responses of an individual who is working towards adapting or adjusting to a new place or culture (Giannikas & Nikitaki, 2022). This stress can affect how individual parents engage in their children's school activities, either inside or outside of the classroom (Alt et al., 2016). In other words, families can feel overwhelmed. In Gilbert et al.'s (2017) study of (how many students) (parents), findings revealed that higher levels of depressive symptoms or increased stressors in parents were correlated with their children's academic performance.

## **Academic Achievement**

### **Teacher Preparation**

Another aspect that plays a role in the success of student learning and academic achievement are the ways in which teachers are prepared to support their English Language Learning students and the understanding these teachers have about how they can approach this in a way that is effective and culturally responsive. Many families who are learning English as a second language have difficulty with coming into a new culture and different lifestyle. If

teachers do not willingly work alongside families, they will be unable to incorporate and understand their culture in a way that can be beneficial for students. In other words, teachers need to make the effort to discover how they can incorporate the parents into the classroom and utilize the parents' knowledge to benefit their students and address the ways in which they teach. Through research, professional development, and working within communities and families, teachers can avoid any obstacles that may develop as a result of many different factors for these families and students.

Many parents have also expressed that even when they want to support their children in the classrooms, there are some barriers that develop as a result of them having their children in a new environment, both to their child and to themselves (Castillo & Gamez, 2013). In this current study helping to show the ways in which supporting childrens' learning, parents expressed their inability to support their children because they do not necessarily know how to properly get involved in the classroom environment and community. He and Thompson (2022) also reported how not only does their ability to interact with the teachers play a role in their involvement in the classroom environment, but also the parents' views towards education and their own personal experiences with education. For example, in this study, it was concluded that parents who had the highest educational expectations for their students based on a survey were more likely to yield higher results or more growth for their children in more than one area (He & Thompson, 2022). These results can show the ways in which teachers being equipped with the proper skills can then lead to more improvements and growth within their classroom.

Kalayci and Ergul (2020), completed a study in which they used the teachers' perspectives to explain how parental involvement not only affects education, but also how the teachers' themselves can affect the extent to which parents become involved. Through a

questionnaire survey, these researchers asked 25 English as a New Language Teachers what they find is important in their classroom in regards to how parents play a role. These were all based on the teachers' experiences and what they have discovered when working alongside parents and guardians to support their students. Not only did the questionnaires ask open ended questions, but also discovered several themes that continually emerged in these surveys. These included what specifically impacts academic achievement, the significance or importance of parent involvement, the parents' ways of involvement in their education, strategies that parents have used to engage themselves in the learning environment, and the teachers' need for further training in the area of involving parents in their classrooms (Kalayci & Ergul, 2020). Through using their personal experiences and feedback in this study, Kalayci and Ergul (2020) concluded that not only did educators place high importance on their parents or their students being involved in some ways in their classroom, they also believe that they lack training in some of these areas. In other words, teachers found that when parents were involved in their classrooms there were many benefits, but teachers were unsure of the strategies to use in order to implement in the classroom to involve parents more often (Kalayci & Ergul, 2020). This relates to the ideas of professional development and how we can better support teachers in order to provide them ways to engage their students' parents in the classroom environment. Not only will this positively impact teachers and parents, but it will also positively impact students and their growth in all areas (Kalayci & Ergul, 2020).

Teachers are also involved in professional development in all different areas in order to ensure they are the most effective teachers and able to support their students and their individual needs. This is not only in English Language Learning environments, but in other classrooms as well. If teachers do not feel equipped, that they have the skills necessary to teach in certain areas,

they will not be able to help their students grow to their full potential. Many districts require that teachers continually take professional development courses in order to best support their students and grow as times change and perspectives on education evolve. Through a survey completed by Salem et al. (2023), we can see how when teachers do not feel equipped to teach in a certain area, they will not have as much of a positive impact on their students (2023). This also relates to the study completed by Kalayci and Ergul (2020) in which they explained through a questionnaire that teachers understand the importance of family involvement, but they do not always have the understanding of how to effectively do that within their own classroom environments.

Many teachers in this current study explained that they did not feel they were taught how to utilize tools to support and help English Language Learners in the classroom. They felt underprepared and did not have the understanding of what it takes to support students. Through school based agricultural education, researchers utilized surveys to see how competent teachers were in forty different areas. Overall, their findings were that they did not have the competency levels that researchers believe can be beneficial for students (Salem et al., 2023). Many of the learning strategies were not only not taught to teachers, but they were also found to be necessary in supporting these teachers (Salem et al., 2023). This even goes to support how when teachers lack confidence in this area, it will become even more difficult for them to support parents who want to be involved in the classroom.

### **Strategies and Materials**

Many English Language Learners Parents feel they speak very well in English proficiently, but they are also made aware that most of the communication that is sent home to families is in English making it more difficult to access what is being discussed (Gilbert et al.,

2017). In order to help families develop a better understanding of what is being done in the classroom and in their child's education, teachers can make sure they are using culturally responsive materials and resources. They should also ensure that anything that is being sent home with or communicated with families is done through a way in which the families can read and understand what is being done or what is being communicated with them. For example, if families who are learning English as a second language are continually being communicated with in their second language, not only may they not understand what is being communicated, but they also may lack the confidence to ask for clarification. They also may be hesitant to communicate with teachers if they know the teachers do not speak their first language. This is why it is also beneficial to make sure families are aware that many districts provide translators that can help them to effectively communicate with the school district itself or even the teachers their child has.

Another area that we see teachers not being fully prepared in is the perceptions teachers have regarding their students and their ability to develop an understanding of the concepts being taught. If teachers have low expectations for their students, they will not have as high academic achievement. Teachers also need to be made aware of how to be culturally responsive to their students and incorporate strategies and tools that help their students to feel seen and valued. Materials should be representative of students and their backgrounds. Sibley and Brabeck (2017) completed a study utilizing a family-community- and school based model in order to demonstrate how partnerships among these three aspects are not only helpful, but necessary for English Language Learners to succeed in the classroom. Through utilizing this model in this study they were able to see the positive ways partnering with communities, parents, and teachers were able to help students. They can also see that supporting families makes these families more

willing to reach out to schools and work alongside them. This can be for many different reasons, but one in particular can be because individuals and families feel more confident and comfortable knowing that schools are not only willing to work alongside them, but also wanting to work alongside them and support them.

Wessel also helped to complete another study involving the literacy development of students and storybook reading for latino families. Through properly educating teachers and parents on how to implement story books in order for them to be effective in supporting their literacy growth, data helped to show that through this partnership students' literacy development grew over time (Wessel, 2014). This qualitative study was completed over an eight week program through the use of a bilingual family literacy program. Wessel acknowledged that some of these families may not be familiar with what a storybook is and how to effectively utilize them with their children. In order to remove any barriers there may have been in this area, families were supported through sessions or training provided in the parents' native language (Wessel, 2014). During this time, parents were provided with the necessary support in order to implement these parallel storybooks correctly and parents were given the opportunity to ask any questions they may have had during this process. Not only does this help to build the parents' confidence, but it also allows for the educators and teachers to know specifically how they can support the parents and show them the ways in which they can implement these storybooks.

## **Social Development**

### **Classroom Environment**

Academic achievement is one of the many ways in which we can measure the effectiveness of our school programs and teachers. Through collecting data in schools, we can see how many times students who are English Language Learners may have lower academic

achievements as a result of some of the obstacles they may face. A lot of our research within this field seeks to discover how we can work alongside parents when students enter school and develop community support in order to help them grow in this area.

One study done with students from early childhood through postsecondary levels helps to demonstrate the ways in which community support can be effective and lead to higher achievement in the area of academics (Sibley & Brabeck, 2017). When English Language Learners reach school age, we can already see the way in which their early childhood experiences may place them at a disadvantage as soon as they begin public education.

### **Confidence in classrooms/interacting with others**

Some English Language Learner students may have a difficult time when working alongside their native peers. This can be for a majority of different reasons, but one in particular may be because of the ways in which they feel isolated and different from their classmates (Sibley & Brabeck, 2017). This can then result in a lack of confidence and desire to participate in events relating to school or having to collaborate with other groups of students. If parents are given the ability to model behaviors for their students, it can then increase their confidence within the classroom and their desire to interact with their peers within the classroom.

Parents' confidence in another language can also directly impact their children and their confidence within the classroom. Castillo and Gamez (2013) helped to demonstrate how when parents were given the opportunity to build their confidence in their second language and their understanding of how they can play a role in their child's success of learning a second language, the students were positively impacted. Through an eighteen month experience in which Castillo and Gomez involved parents, students, and teachers, they were able to utilize data that supported that when parents are given the opportunity to be involved in their child's education, even if they

are not proficient in the second language, there were benefits and positive implications for these students involved. Parents were educated, therefore building their confidence, and allowing them to see the ways in which they can help to facilitate and support their child's learning and their experiences in the classroom.

Therefore, parents' confidence increased as a result of these training sessions and through having their child's understanding increase as a result of this, so did their confidence within the classroom and their willingness to engage in classroom experiences and topics. The results show much growth and improvement in these areas indicating their literacy development grew following these trainings (Castillo & Gamez, 2013). In another academic domain they also saw growth in their writing skills. Just through working through an aspect as simple as their confidence within the classroom, we can then see growth in each of these academic areas. Even with any of these barriers, this helps to demonstrate how if researchers are able to support finding effective strategies and ways to support families, we can then as educators help them to build their confidence and as a result impact their children in a positive way. Teachers can also instill confidence in their students within the classroom as well in order to support their self concept.

We can also utilize parents' knowledge of their children and their background to build the classroom environments around our students and their individualism and differences in backgrounds and family experiences. Many teachers may have the belief that they are the lead or main figure of the learning environment, but this is not necessarily the case (Kalayci & Ergul, 2020). Parents are not just a small factor that play a role in the education of their students, but a source of knowledge for educators to rely on and allow them to develop ways to support their individual needs and backgrounds. The classroom environment also plays a large role in student



growth and it is very important that the classroom is reflective of the students and their differences. This is why as an educator it is extremely important to understand that even though their role is so important in the students' lives, they also need to rely on resources outside of the classroom. Parents are one of these resources that teachers can rely on in order to bring their differences into the classroom and make sure they are representing their students in the appropriate manner and showing them how their differences are valued within their classroom community.

In the next Chapter we will explore the ways in which we can involve parents of English Language Learning students in the classroom environment. Through having English as a New Language teachers work alongside general education teachers, we will determine what strategies are effective in partnering with parents. Through collaborating and learning from other veteran educators within the field, general education teachers will find ways to effectively reach out to families and collect data in order to see the effects of these given strategies and efforts to collaborate with others. Through implementing these strategies that have been found to be effective for several teachers, general education teachers in Longwood will determine what works best for their students and the families of their students within their classrooms. This will also lead to discussions among several teachers in order to show the ways in which they can learn from one another and what strategies were implemented in each of these English as a New Language classroom environments.

### **Chapter 3: Description of Product and Tools**

Research in Chapter 2 helped to demonstrate the ways in which parental involvement can play a role in the success of students within the classroom. These studies show how parental involvement can impact social-emotional development and improve performance across academic areas (Giannikas & Nikitaki, 2022; Ngozwana et al., 2024). While many teachers are able to efficiently involve their students' parents in their classrooms, others report a lack of understanding of how to properly support and integrate students' parents into the classroom and broader school community (Castillo & Gamez, 2013). Thus, I propose a professional development course for general education teachers who have English Language Learners in their classrooms.

This professional development course will take place every other week on top of the regularly scheduled monthly faculty meetings. It is designed for teachers who teach kindergarten through fourth grade in Longwood Elementary School. These meetings will be composed into two different parts each session. The first session of the month will involve the English as a New Language teachers coming in and teaching strategies to teachers on how they can involve their students' parents in their classroom. The end of the session will also allow for feedback from teachers about some questions they may have or any thoughts they have in regards to the strategies. The next session will involve students giving feedback on how effective they found the strategies and what they found works best for them. They will also collaborate with other teachers and have the opportunity to share any ideas they have.

#### **Agenda of Events**

Every month, all teachers in this elementary school meet together to work on professional development in different areas of the school. These two sessions will take place in addition to

these meetings with only general education teachers who have ELL students in their classrooms. This is to make the meetings more intimate since these monthly meetings involve over 50 teachers, some who do not work with ESL students. The meetings will take place at a round table in the conference room. This gives teachers the ability to face one another and have conversations with their peers. The first session will be less interactive and involve more direct teaching, while the second session of the month will involve teachers having more of an opportunity to share their ideas and give any feedback they may have. These sessions will be every other week and be forty minutes each. They will take place during common planning, which is in the morning prior to students coming into the classrooms.

During the first session the English as a New Language teachers will use Google slides to show teachers ways in which they can support their parents in the classroom. Every teacher will receive a copy of these slides to reference back to as time goes on. They will also be given handouts that can be used in their classrooms in order to make communication with their parents more effective. Teachers will be asked to implement at least two of the strategies being taught before the next session in order to receive feedback for the next session to discuss.

Through these sessions we are hoping to better equip teachers with tools to use in their classrooms to support their students through communicating with parents. These sessions also allow teachers to learn from veteran teachers and one another about what works best.

### **Supports for Parents**

Throughout the first session, not only will teachers be taught ways to support parents, but they will also be provided with tools that can help involve parents in the classroom and help communication between the parents and the teacher to be more open. One form that will be given to families is a form that shows the families who they can reach out to for different

supports. Frequently, families have questions for their students' teachers, but hesitate to reach out because they are unaware of who to contact or who they may be able to effectively communicate with (Wee, 2020). Not only will this form provide a way for parents to figure out who they can reach out to, but it will also connect them with someone who can translate for them or support them in any way they need (Appendix A).

It is crucial for parents to be involved in setting up a classroom environment where students not only are able to be successful, but also feel valued and know they have an important role in the classroom. Parents are also the source of knowledge for teachers and know their children so well (Wee, 2020). Effective strategies require collaboration with parents, fostering open communication and feedback (Wessels, 2014). Parents will also be given forms that can be provided in their first language in order to ensure that parents understand what is being sent home to them and how to properly fill them out. There is an example of this in Appendix B. These will be provided by the English as a New Language teachers in order to show teachers examples of ways in which they can support their students' parents. These teachers can also reach out to the English Language Learners teachers if they need extra support.

### **Practices**

Through the use of the English as a New Language teachers (Vakil et al., 2023) and their knowledge of best practices for working alongside parents, they will compose a presentation that will help to show ways in which these general education teachers can support their student's parents and families. While some teachers already implement proper strategies, the purpose of these sessions are to target those teachers who may need more support. General education teachers who believe they use proper methods to work alongside parents will also be given the opportunity to share with the group what has worked for them in the past. As discussed in

Chapter 2, some teachers who feel they developed a good understanding of how to support their student's parents and families, but there is still a large majority that is unaware of the strategies and tools they can use to support their student's families (Gilbert et al. 2017).

The first sessions composed of the teaching by the ENL teachers will be done through a Google Slide (see Appendix C). These slides show the images of the forms that can be used for their classes, while also showing tips on how to work alongside families and create a partnership. This as a result will also lead to a better classroom community and environment for students. Throughout this session teachers can also ask questions and share some of the experiences they may have had in the past. Then at the end of the session teachers will be given a chart that is found in Appendix D. This form shows some of the strategies taught and reviewed during the first session including a parent invite form that will be presented in both their first language as well as English. This can be found in Appendix E. This chart allows for teachers to mark down what strategies they have used and then mark any feedback they may have. They can comment on if parents were more receptive to their new strategies, or if they saw any changes in their students, whether academically, behaviorally, or emotionally.

These data sheets will then be used in the following session to go over and discuss as a group. These sheets will record what strategies were implemented throughout their time and also record any responses from both the parents and students in their classrooms. These data sheets will allow for feedback and help teachers to keep track of what they have observed over the time. These sheets are also provided to each teacher, so it allows them to compare their data in similar ways and learn from their peers.

### **Collaborating with Peer Teachers**

The second session of these meetings will be formatted a little differently. They will still be completed around a table in order to allow for interactions among teachers. During this time, each teacher will be paired up. For the first fifteen minutes teachers will share with their partners what they did with their students and what they found happened as a result of their actions. They will be given this time to comment on one another's methods and learn from one another. The remainder of the time will be done as a whole group and teachers will share what worked well and what did not work well. They can then make note of things that worked in other classes so that they can implement them in their classroom if they have not already used the strategy. Then taking these tips and ideas they will continue to implement these strategies to make note of the growth or changes over time. The ENL teachers will still be involved in this process in order to give constructive feedback.

The teachers involved in this process are expected to be implementing at least one of these new strategies while collecting any feedback they are seeing. This data sheet also needs to be brought with them to each meeting in order to share with others. The ENL teachers will also provide feedback throughout the process and work alongside these teachers.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, these strategies and meetings will allow for growth with implementing proper ways to communicate with parents. In the end, the goal is for this to positively impact the students in these classrooms and improve overall classroom community and communication with parents. Many times teachers or parents may be unaware of the many resources available to them, so these are a few ways in which teachers can work together to improve in these areas.

## Chapter 4: Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis capstone project was to identify the factors influencing parental involvement and to find ways to improve parent communication with teachers and schools among ENL families. Increased parental involvement has been shown to enhance students' lives (Giannikas & Nikitaki, 2022; Sibley & Brabeck, 2017; Wee, 2020). In several domains through recording observations or collecting specific measurable data through looking at academics, we can see improvements in behaviors and growth in skills within the classroom environment (Vakil et al., 2023). Through extensive research several questions related to English Language Learning and how teachers can encourage greater parental participation in the classroom community were addressed. The questions explored included: (1) (1) What barriers may there be in helping parents to become involved in their children's education? (2) How can teachers better support parents and involve them in their classroom community? (3) What should the next steps be for teachers and researchers involved in this area of learning (parental involvement and English as a New Language)?

Research has provided answers to these questions, revealing several factors that influence PI in their child's education and classroom environment. These factors include financial distress (e.g., Kalayci & Ergul, 2020; Sibley & Brabeck, 2017), depression (e.g., Alt et al., 2016; He & Thompson, 2022), perceptions about education from parents and teachers (e.g., Giannikas & Nikitaki, 2022; He & Thompson, 2022), and difficulties in effective communication between parents and teachers (e.g., Gilbert et al., 2017; Kalayci & Ergul, 2020). Each of these aspects can impact how parents interact with schools. Even if parents wish to be engaged in their child's school community, these barriers can hinder their participation.

Through research and implementing effective strategies we can find ways to better support both parents and teachers. There are many effective communication methods for parents of ELLs, so it is important to find strategies that work for families within the English as a New Language community. By removing barriers and finding ways around them, we can establish a partnership with parents to better support students.

However, we may not be able to completely eliminate these factors, but we can still come alongside families and support them in different ways. We can take a multidimensional approach in order to more effectively and efficiently work alongside families. First, we can find ways to better equip general education teachers working with this population of students and families. Then, we can find ways for teachers to effectively implement strategies that have been found to be effective in the past for educators who have been working in this field and working with this population. After they can implement these strategies over a given period of time, then we can see how it has played a role in the lives of their students through observations and collecting data on academics and any behavioral changes.

These changes can be recorded whether negative or positive in order to determine a valid and reliable result from these strategies being implemented in the classroom environment. This can also be done in several classrooms to determine if teachers and students are having common experience and change when using similar strategies, or strategies that are the same among classes. Thus, implementing sessions where general education teachers are working alongside ENL teachers is a good step in the right direction of finding ways to support general education teachers, and then as a result having them positively impact the families and their students. We need to start at the source when addressing these issues to see the positive effects develop over time and support our students in each of these classroom environments.



**Implications for Teachers**

The ways in which this program can impact teachers has many benefits. Not only will these sessions give teachers the opportunity to build on their understanding of parent communication skills among ESL students and families, but it will also build their confidence. Kalayci and Ergul (2020) found that many of the teachers feel poorly prepared to support these families and they believe that they would benefit from having more support for themselves in these areas. Just like students, teachers will also show growth in their ability to teach when they develop a sense of confidence in themselves and the ways they are teaching. This confidence can directly impact students and the attitudes in which they have towards education. Teachers will have the opportunity to build relationships with their coworkers, fostering a sense of community among the building and instill a team system for teachers. Collaboration is one of the many ways in which we can see growth and changes in school districts, and it almost always starts with the teachers and the environment that they create among the other educators within the school.

**Implications for Schools**

These sessions can also play a role in the way in which the school itself shows growth in their community building. As stated previously, through having teachers in this building work alongside one another, we are helping them to build relationships and make connections with others. The school climate is then directly affected by this because teachers develop a sense of partnership and show how their goal as a community is to work towards the bettering of their school systems and support each individual student in the ways they need. Teachers will develop the perspective that they are there for their students primarily, but also to support one another and build relationships.

**Implications for Parents**

Alongside the several benefits for the school and educators, parents will also become involved in the classroom community, positively impacting students and their growth in several domains. Even though these sessions are not done directly with parents and families, we can see that through working with teachers, it will affect the parents and families as a result. Through the many forms and messages being sent to families, the families will be less hesitant to contact schools and their relationships will grow with the teachers and workers within the building. Parents will also develop a more positive attitude towards education because they will see the ways in which teachers are prioritizing building relationships with them and utilizing their knowledge and feedback to benefit the students.

Parents will also be more confident when working with their children because they will have many of the necessary tools to support their children and ways to reach out if they need more support. It is very beneficial to show families that there are ways to reach out to schools and people they can contact when they need support in different areas. Even something as simple as sending home a contact form is a good example of how we can show families ways they can reach out to and work alongside schools.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

As a result of these sessions being newly implemented, there are ways in which we can improve these techniques for future research. One way we can improve these sessions is through having teachers meet with a partner teacher each morning. This will allow for them to discuss the ways in which they plan on implementing the strategies in their classrooms that day and then provide constructive feedback. Once they have the opportunity to hear back from a colleague, they can more efficiently implement the strategies into their classrooms.

Another thing that we can do in the future is to use a chart over a longer period of time that can show the growth of students as time progresses when implementing these strategies. We can use a chart for behaviors, social-emotional learning, as well as academics. This can also help us to see if there are more specific areas that are impacted through parents being more involved in their children's learning and education.

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**Appendix A**

**Who to Contact?**

**A quién contactar**

<p><b>General Questions</b> <b>preguntas generales</b></p>	<p><b>Classroom Teacher</b> <b>Profesora de aula</b></p> <p>_____</p>
<p><b>Homework Questions</b> <b>preguntas de tarea</b></p>	<p><b>Instructional Coach</b> <b>entrenador de instrucción</b></p> <p>_____</p>
<p><b>Attendance Questions</b> <b>preguntas de asistencia</b></p>	<p><b>Main Office</b> <b>oficina principal</b></p> <p>_____</p>
<p><b>Academic Questions</b> <b>preguntas academicas</b></p>	<p><b>Instructional Coach</b> <b>entrenador de instrucción</b></p> <p>_____</p>
<p><b>Questions about Supports</b> <b>preguntas sobre soportes</b></p>	<p><b>ENL Teacher</b> <b>ENL maestra</b></p> <p>_____</p>

Phone Number for Interpreters: \_\_\_\_\_ **Número de teléfono para intérpretes:** \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix B

Getting to Know your Student

Please fill this out with your child.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Holidays Celebrated: \_\_\_\_\_

Favorite Hobbies: \_\_\_\_\_

Anything we should know:



### Conociendo a su estudiante

Por favor llene esto con su hija.

Nombre: \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha de nacimiento: \_\_\_\_\_

Fiestas celebradas: \_\_\_\_\_

Hobbies favoritos: \_\_\_\_\_

Cualquier cosa que debemos saber:





**Appendix C**

[Google Slides- Capstone](#)

<https://voicethread.com/myvoice/thread/28529652>

**Appendix D**

**Teacher Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Week of:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please check off any new strategies you used below:**

- **Weekly messages (in their primary language)**
  
- **Sending home questionnaire form**
  
- **Sending home contact sheet**
  
- **Sending home get to know you form**
  
- **Offering parents to come in and read to class/activity**
  
- **Hanging signs that represent your students' backgrounds (asking families for input)**

**Parent Responses:**

- **Parents reached out more often**
  
- **Parents continued to reach out the same**
  
- **Parents did not reach out/respond at all**

**Notes:**

**Student Response/Changes:**

**Appendix E**

**Class Invite Form**

<p><b>Name of Parent:</b></p> <p><b>Name of Student:</b></p>
<p><b>This is a form to invite you into your child’s classroom. You are invited to come in and share something special about your family or read a book that is meaningful to you to our class.</b></p> <p><b>Check ‘yes’ or ‘no’ if you would like to come.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Yes</li><li>● No</li></ul>

<p><b>Nombre del Padre:</b></p> <p><b>Nombre de estudiante:</b></p>
<p><b>Este es un formulario para invitarlo al salón de clases de su hijo. Está invitado a venir y compartir algo especial sobre su familia, o leer en nuestra clase un libro que sea significativo para usted.</b></p> <p><b>Marque "sí" o "no" si desea venir.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Sí</li><li>● No</li></ul>