Empowering English Language Learner Family Engagement

by
Ashley Findel
March 2022

A capstone project submitted to the Department of Education and Human Development of The College at Brockport, State University of New York in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Science in Education.

Abstract

This capstone aims to support any people who work, or plan to work, closely with English language learners (ELLs) and their families. From personal experience and discussion with others who work with ELLs, family engagement was seen to be a high concern in the area of ELL education. ELLs, like all students, are impacted by the level of support they are given. Providing students with support from home, school, and their community offers more opportunity to learn and a more positive view of education. To increase family engagement among the ELL population, schools and educators must be provided with tools or strategies to empower family's engagement in students' learning. Understanding why ELL families may have limited or no engagement in students' education is the first step to supporting them. Debunking misconceptions that are tossed around about ELL families and their views of education opens many opportunities for supporting families in ways that work for them. After understanding is built by getting to really know families and learn about them, support can be provided through language support, interest topic based lessons and assignments, communication, homework support, and community support. Strategies and supports, such as those provided in this capstone and Teacher Toolbox (Appendix D) can be modified to fit any and all families and their learners. In applying strategies to support and empower families, along with meaningful reflection from educators, it is intended that families will feel more welcome, be more meaningfully engaged, and learning for students will improve..

Keywords: English Language Learner, family engagement, parent engagement, professional development, school community, language supports, empowering families

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

Families play a major part of student success in learning (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017). Encouraging family engagement in learners' education is a large factor in students' continued growth and development. Parental involvement may be the strongest predictor of a child receiving a solid education (Knight & Gilpatrick, 2019). However, a common challenge faced in education is the limited or lack of family engagement within English language learner (ELL) community. According to the United States Department of Education Office of English Language Acquisition (2020), the ELL population has grown in the United States by 28.1% between the 2000-01 and the 2016-17 school year with an increase of more than 1 million students learning English (Mitchell, 2020). Language barriers and misconceptions believed about many of these families continue to make engagement in learning difficult. It is often believed that these families do not value or care about education. This mindset puts these families behind a barrier from the start. It is essential that educators work to understand families' culture, values, and strengths to support and empower them to engage in student learning and help the child grow and succeed.

Throughout this product the terms *parent involvement, parent engagement, family involvement, and family engagement* will be used. These diverse terms are included since differing authors, researchers, and studies used various terminology. For the purpose of this project, these terms are not meant to be exclusionary in any way. According to Larry Ferlazzo (2011), "One of the dictionary definitions of *involve* is "to enfold or envelope," whereas one of the meanings of *engage* is "to come together and interlock". Thus, involvement implies *doing to*; in contrast, engagement implies *doing with"* (para. 4). In this project, the terms *parent* and *families* will be used. For the focus of this project, these terms will hold the meaning of, an

individual or individuals who take care of and support the child. The terms: *parent involvement, parent engagement, family involvement, and family engagement* will also be used. These terms will hold the same meaning as *family engagement*, where families are inclusive of all different types of family structures and engagement includes working together as schools and families.

Increased family involvement leads to increased student success, family and teacher satisfaction, and improved school climate (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017). Families want to be included and engage in their children's learning but often do not know how or are faced with barriers keeping them from doing so (Chavkin and Willams Jr., 1989). By implementing strategies that decrease language barriers for ELL families, increase families' confidence in having a voice in their child's learning, individualize assignments to emphasize family strengths and values, while also working to develop open, honest, and respectful communication between families, schools, and educators can improve ELL family engagement in children's learning (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Pushor, 2012). Providing educators with valuable information and strategies to begin their journey in empowering their families allows for a more inclusive and productive community. Educators, school staff, administrators, and families are all working with the same goal in mind, to support the child in their journey of growth and learning (Chávez-Reyes, 2010). Thus, the purpose of this project is centered around that overarching goal.

The purpose of this project is to encourage teachers, administrators, and staff to reflect on their efforts as individuals and as a community to engage ELL families in the school environment and their child's learning. Engaging in meaningful and honest reflection is intended to increase actions by schools and educators to improve their efforts to empower engagement within the ELL population. Through strategies and tools that are meaningful and appropriate for those individual families, the goal is to increase family inclusion, comfort, and understanding in

the school and classroom community and in turn, developing and maintaining respectful relationships with families and students that are based on understanding of cultural and individual values and strengths.

ELL families can face a number of barriers that are often mistaken for the misconception that they do not care about their children's education. Language, power imbalances, unfamiliarity with school systems or community, other people's perceptions, educational background, and schedules or other responsibilities are some barriers faced by ELL families (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Chávez-Reyes, 2010; Panferov, 2010; Wassell, Hawrylak, & Scantlebury, 2015). In Chapter 2, I review literature that has evaluated family engagement strategies to support ELL families and overcome these barriers. The literature that is reviewed in Chapter 2 has provided background, purpose, and strategies to develop and design the webinar, tool, and professional development, that gives a starting point for educators to empower families, discussed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Parent involvement in education today is accepted as necessary for student success in most communities and studies have shown that engaged and active parent involvement in the schooling of children increases the sense of belonging and improves academic and behavior performance of these children (Chávez-Reyes, 2010). However, the challenges that any parent faces in supporting their child in school can be awfully daunting, and often these issues are magnified for those parents of English language learner (ELL) students (Panferov, 2010). Family engagement may be a result of teacher beliefs, language barriers, previous educational experiences, and cultural beliefs about education. According to Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn, & Van Voorhis (2002), there are three spheres of influence which directly affect student learning and development: school, family, and community. It is an inarguable fact that students are at the center of their education, development, and success in school and later in life (Epstein, et al., 2002). This literature review examines possible reasons for limited parent engagement among the English language learner population. Additionally, it also highlights the importance of establishing environments for family engagement, the benefit it carries for students, and potential strategies that can be implemented by educators and parents to improve the quality of education for our students.

In searching for literature to review, there was a lack of research available that presented outcomes of family engagement on ELL students or their families specifically. There was limited information describing effects of positive family engagement on ELL language development, parent confidence, or teacher relationships with families and students. The literature showed a plethora of research presenting parent and educator accounts for possible reasons behind limited family engagement and barriers keeping ELL families from engaging.

Theoretical Framework

Much of the literature reviewed connects to the theory of Funds of Knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992). According to Hogg (2011), originally, funds of knowledge was an anthropological term from Wolf in 1966 to refer to households' resources and knowledge to be able to manipulate and make ends meet, such as social, economical, and nutritional needs. The term and theory was developed deeper later on by Vélez-Ibáñez in 1988 who took Wolf's ideas and applied them to economically vulnerable Mexican families and looked deeper into how these funds of knowledge applied to immigrant households (Hogg, 2011).

Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González (1992) define funds of knowledge "to refer to these historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and wellbeing" (p. 133). Throughout this project, this is the definition that will be considered. Hogg (2011) states that Vélez-Ibáñez found that these funds of knowledge were exchanged socially and these survival supports were within different cultures and varied depending on the group. This view inspired a group of educational academics (Moll, González, Greenberg, Velez, Amanti, Andrade, Dworin, Floyd-Tenery, Witmore, Civil, Fry, Saavedra, & Tapia) in Tucson to see the relevance of funds of knowledge within the school setting (Hogg, 2011). Funds of Knowledge theory offers a framework for providing effective information to educate diverse students through learning about their lives and backgrounds which can be done through a focus on the household's everyday practices and experiences (Hogg, 2011; Moll, et al.,1992). To learn about funds of knowledge, the educator places themself in the home setting in situations where they will be a learner, listener, observer, and will build contexts that know the child and their families as a people and not just students in the classroom (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). The Funds of Knowledge approach allows

educators and other individuals who work with ELL students to engage with the ELL and their family, rather than resorting to believing misconception (Hogg, 2011; Moll, et al.,1992)

Working Together

In, *A Comprehensive Framework*, Epstein, et al. (2002) discusses that, "If educators view children simply as *students*, they are likely to see the family as separate from the school" (p. 21). Education is not a series of separate groups or as Epstein, et al. (2002) refers to them, spheres of influence. Education is an overlap of those spheres, those who influence students daily: family, community, and school. Family involvement can be implemented using two approaches. The first, as a means to an end, a management issue, to get people to behave a certain way and get the funding they need (Chávez-Reyes, 2010). In contrast, the inclusive approach to family involvement emphasizes human relations, cultivating interpersonal relationships, and functions to improve ELLs' academic performance and development (Chávez-Reyes, 2010). This is the intended goal; viewing students as children and doing what can be done to help them grow and develop. This approach emphasizes the value in English language learners' first languages (L1) and culture, recognizes strengths and challenges of families as well as the school in working with ELLs. Educating children is a complex system where parent involvement is fundamental to academic success in students (Zuazo-Legido, 2008). Many educators often view education of children in separate spheres. Each one, independent of the other. These educators often make comments such as, 'If the family would just do their job, we could do our job,' or families who say, 'I raise my child, now it is your job to educate her.' (Epstein, et al., 2002). In an ethnographic study conducted by Wassell, Hawrylak, & Scantlebury (2015) middle school STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) educators' perspectives on family involvement for ELLs was investigated. The study's results found that the teachers in the study

described perceptions and the existence of barriers for ELL family involvement; however, many maintained that families did not do enough to help students at home with academic work such as homework or communicate with educators. Their comments were often comparative with conceptions of good and bad parents. In a group interview during the study, one sixth-grade science teacher's comment represented this narrow definition and view of family involvement; it was as follows:

> You have to do the hard things, show me your [home]work...Yeah, parents have to step up and be parents… show that you're willing to put down everything you do at night to say, 'show me what you know.' And [if] you do it, you've told the child I care about you (Wassell, Hawrylak, & Scantlebury, 2017, p.1245).

This view of separate jobs, responsibilities, and expectations does not promote collaboration among parents, teachers, and the community, all of whom have the same goal at the center, to better the child. This separate view where the spheres of influence work alongside each other, rather than working together, lacks respectful understanding of families. If the same central goal is in place, to support the child in their journey of growth and learning, then the outcome for parent involvement goes beyond simple participation, but rather empowerment of families to be active in the child's education (Chávez-Reyes, 2010).

The Power Imbalance

Much of the research published involving parent engagement and parent involvement assumes that when there are efforts put forward for parent-teacher collaboration, that this occurs on an equal power level (Shim, 2013). There is an unequal power relation between parents and schools in which schools' power emanates from the social view of being experts and authorities in educating while also adding the power of legally being obligated to report neglect and abuse

within families (Chávez-Reyes, 2010). Families, on the other hand, have a power that lies in their home, especially those families who are undocummented (Chávez-Reyes, 2010).

Too often, even when schools, in their best intentions, are inviting parents' involvement, there is still a feeling of being sidelined (Pushor, 2012). Pushor (2012) discusses her experience in her son's schooling. She discusses ways the school involves parents: attending school meetings, parent-teacher conferences, fundraising, helping with school events, attending concerts, class parties, sport events, field trips, reading to the class, and involvement in the newsletter. Although these efforts were valuable and included her in the school community, she continued to feel as though she was not involved in the life purpose of her son's education. Parents hold great knowledge about their children that can be used as a resource when schools and families work together to better the child. She emphasizes an account in a parent teacher conference where the teacher discussed her son's growth and progress in school activities without inquiring about his activities, behaviors, or growth at home. "I learned to be present in my son's school life - but not expect a place or a voice on the school landscape in which I contributed to his learning" (Pushor, 2012, p. 465). This made her feel as though she was just another *warm body,* there to watch and listen, her expertise was not called upon, welcomed into the school environments (Pushor, 2012). Pushor's experience returns back to Chávez-Reyes' (2010) notion of involvement to get things done and as a management.

Chavkin and Willams Jr. (1989) write about a six-year study which looked at low-income parents' attitudes toward involvement in education. At an open house, where translators were available for those who were non-English reading or speaking, parents were given a questionnaire in which they self-reported on several areas such as: general ideas about parent involvement, interest in school decisions, interest in parent involvement, parent participation in

activities, suggestions for improving, reasons for less involvement at high school level, and demographic information. The results of the questionnaire showed that 97% of parents agreed that they want to spend time helping their child get the best education and support involvement in their child's learning at school. However, parents also reported that they wanted teachers to provide more support for parent involvement, such as more information about learning activities and ideas about how to help with homework. Although parents showed they want to be involved and that support their children's learning, a high percentage of families expressed that they felt they had little say or control in their child's education and success in school (Chavkin & Willams Jr., 1989). Educators can help families by providing them the opportunities and strategies to have more say and contribution for their child's learning and engage with their education.

Pushor's (2012) research at Princess Alexandra Community School on parent engagement and parent knowledge brought forward the importance of balancing the unequal power present in education for schools and families. There must be a push to move beyond the school environment, focusing on creating opportunities for a more balanced relationship where families, schools, and the community collaborate on the assets that each has to contribute (Albrecht, 2021). Learning about families in the environment of their own homes and communities to learn how they contribute to their children's education and the strengths they have in which educators can support further engagement. Teachers must work towards empowerment of families, communities, and teachers starting with a transparent agenda for how to collaborate in a meaningful way with the students at the center (Albrecht, 2021). Building a knowledge of families helps schools and educators work with families to provide them the support and tools they want and need to feel confident and meaningful in their children's learning.

Moving Beyond the School Environment

Moving beyond the school environment, deepening engagement, increasing the quality of parent-teacher collaboration, and integrating community into schools allows educators to explore students' funds of knowledge and work to establish an environment that provides more individualized learning and support. Moving beyond the school landscape, or environment, and moving into the home environment of the families and communities provides valuable information into the funds of knowledge and strengths within each family, (Pushor, 2021). The concept behind Funds of Knowledge is that, "People are competent, they have knowledge, and their life experiences have given them that knowledge." (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005, p. ix-x; Moll, et al.,1992). González, Moll, & Amanti (2005) claim that firsthand research, where one enters the home of students as a learner, willing to interact with families, allows for documentation of competence and knowledge that each family possesses. In this a more positive view of students' strengths is produced. All of which are too often overlooked (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Opening up to the valuable information that can be learned about families when the view is shifted from the school and classroom to the home and community inform educators about how to engage families in their child's learning.

González, Moll, and Amanti (2005), discuss their Funds of Knowledge project and the use of home visits to collect this valuable information. They discuss the *new* version of home visits, beyond teachers or social workers visiting homes and bringing tools, taking the floor, and instructing within the home of others (Moll, et al.,1992). This project discusses a more useful method of home visits starting with being open to getting to know everything about families. When children are known in the contexts of their homes, families, and communities, that strength and knowledge can be brought into the school space and community, developing an

environment that encourages learning (Pushor, 2012). Opening up as educators to engage within the students' landscape and learn about their experiences gives a way to create a better environment where students will consider themselves part of the learning group and in turn feel more comfortable and open to learning.

Home visits and learning about families' funds of knowledge allows educators to get to know students and families for who they are from their own perspectives. Educators can learn valuable information by listening to stories, spending time in homes, looking at how families interact and speak with each other, take note on how guests are viewed, look for literature around the home, and take note of how the spaces around the home are used (Pushor, 2012). In this, educators work to build mutual respect and understanding to develop relationships with families and children, creating a better learning experience.

Wassell, et al. (2017) came across new findings in their study of teacher expectations for Latinx families. The study showed the majority of teachers in the study had specific expectations for families of ELLs even after discussion of challenging barriers ELL families face with school engagement. However, in this study, there was one teacher who spoke the same first language (L1) as the students, took the time to speak with them, call families, make connections, and create a learning environment where there was quality education as well as family empowerment, respect, and encouragement to be active members in their child's learning. This teacher created an atmosphere for her students and families where they felt comfortable to learn and take risks. As Pushor (2012) states, "It is when the boundaries between school, home, and community become permeable and multidirectional that the creation of a new story of school that honors and enriches children's lives was realized" (p. 472). Families and students begin to feel engaged and fulfilled from sharing their experiences, strengths, and expertise with others in the

influential spheres of the child, working together with a common goal of respecting and valuing one another's contributions (Pushor, 2012). When educators make it clear to families that they are valuable members of the learning community, with a common passion and goal at the center, this can build relationships based on respect and understanding. With these relationships, educators can better reach families in their efforts to support their educational engagement.

Family Contributions

Epstein, et al. (2002) states that, in surveys and field studies involving teachers, parents, and students of all grade levels, some important patterns can be seen: just about all families care about their children and want them to grow and succeed; just about all teachers and administrators want to involve families, but do not know how; and just about all students of all ages want their families to be partners in their schooling (Epstein, et al., 2002). It has been seen in many studies that parent involvement is a key to children's success in school and that it is twice as predictive of a student's academic learning as family socioeconomic status (Chavkin & Williams Jr., 1989). However, the traditional view of parent involvement in schools can not be accepted, one that is based on middle class, white families. This is not an acceptable expectation and requires a change that fosters understanding for all families (Albrecht, 2021). Looking at family engagement in a new light and thinking about all families gives all families the opportunity. Helping provide families the opportunities and guiding them through ways to engage in their children's learning in ways that work for them helps all families who want to be engaged but are not sure how or where to start.

The public is flooded with myths and stereotypes about minority and immigrant families. One of the most detrimental ones to be believed by educators and others in the community is that minority and immigrant families are not involved or present in their children's learning because

they do not value education (Chávez-Reyes, 2010). These stereotypes put up barriers for minority and immigrant families, especially those within the ELL community. This misconception puts these families into a space where schools are not welcoming. There are a number of factors that result in what is perceived to be low parent engagement for ELLs. Despite challenges that may be faced by some ELL families, there are some immigrant families that are more active in their child's learning than some U.S. born community members (Chávez-Reyes, 2010). Debunking these misconceptions through taking steps to having open communication with families and students that allows educators to learn and gain a better understanding for families can be the start to breaking down the barriers between ELL families and being empowered to engage in student learning.

According to Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008), families of ELLs may find it challenging to engage in children's schooling for many different reasons. Many parents reported that language is a barrier that often stands between them and the involvement in their child's learning and the feeling of being unwelcomed in the school community. ELL families may encounter school based barriers where there may be a deficit of perceptions that often view these families as the problem and as lacking resources to provide for their child. This barrier is often the one that leads educators to believe that lack of school engagement directly correlates with lack of parental interest (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). Lack of English proficiency continues to be one of the biggest barriers between ELLs' families and parental information and family engagement (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). Language barriers often stand in the way of families providing at home support with learning such as homework or projects. Parents may also find it difficult to express their concerns and ask questions to school staff if proper translation services are not provided (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). Lack of language

proficiency is a barrier that educators can support families with. Taking time to understand the barrier and developing or acquiring supports that will eliminate or lessen that barrier for families makes their opportunity to engage in the child's learning greater.

Panferov (2010) mentions another barrier that ELL families may face is that of the parent's education level or educational experiences. Parents themselves may not have had formal schooling or had interrupted schooling. Those who are familiar with formal school may have experiences different from the practices of the United States school system or that of their state. Navigating the U.S. school system can be challenging and daunting to newcomers (Panferov, 2010). Parents may be embarrassed about limited schooling and be uneasy around educators and staff (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). Building an understanding for families' backgrounds with non-judgement and tools to support them through what might be a new experience and environment can make families feel more welcome to the school community.

In addition, families often have different cultural views of education. Arias & Morillo-Campbell (2008) discuss that, opposite of the misconception mentioned earlier, in which families do not care about children's education or that they do not value education, many families hold the cultural belief that teachers and parents have different roles in the education process. Many view themselves, as parents, to take the role of nurturing, teaching values, and instilling good behaviors into the children, whereas they perceive the teacher role to be that of an educator, "the experts" [those whose job it is to know the content] who take on tasks of actual learning [academic content] (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). Where schools may see this on the surface as parents not being involved due to lack of care, it is quite the contrary. ELL families may believe that it is not their place to step into educators' roles and involve themselves in the business of the classroom, just as they may also not be quick to offer instructional help at home

(Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). Arias & Morillo-Campbell (2008), discuss the importance of recognizing this within classrooms and acknowledging parents' cultural values and view them as strengths. When values and strengths are considered in the classroom and the school community, families' sense of belonging and value increases and helps educators individualize the support for families and for the student's learning.

In addition, ELLs' parents often hold labor intensive work schedules that limits their availability and flexibility to attend events held at certain times of the day such as parent-teacher conferences (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). Parents who work nights often find it hard to even make it to open houses, parent conferences, parent workshops, clubs, or other types of extra curricular activities held at the school. Transportation may also limit parent's availability to attend these types of events (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). In understanding families schedules and struggles or obstacles, educators can accommodate families so they do not need to make choices between responsibilities and students' education.

Although parents' formal education does not create as large of a barrier compared to the other barriers, this was seen to be a challenge for some families. In the study conducted by Wassell, et al. (2017) in a middle school STEM classroom, the lack of formal education is reported to become a barrier when students need support at home and parents are unfamiliar with the content as well as the language. In the same study, two sixth-grade teachers expressed their concerns that they felt the families did not know the content to help at home, but also might become slightly embarrassed or intimidated when their children confronted them with their homework (Wassell, et al., 2017). Interactions like these with learning can often give parents and families discomfort toward school. Making parents feel empowered to support their child is key in parental engagement. Learning about families and what holds them back from engaging in

their child's education and using this to develop ways in supporting these families appropriately is key in beginning to empower families.

Potential Strategies to Overcome Barriers

Although ELL families often face many barriers that limit parental engagement in their child's learning, this does not mean the problem must persist. There are strategies and steps that can be implemented to support family engagement in ELLs' education.

Six Types of Involvement Practices

Epstein, et al. (2002), describes six types of involvement that schools can focus on to help families and communities become informed and involved in learning activities. These areas have been developed from many studies and work done by educators and families to help schools see where there can be efforts put forth to increase inclusion and collaboration. These six types of involvement include support for parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community (Appendix A, Appendix B) (Epstein, et al., 2002). The types of involvement give suggestions of ways for educators and school staff to support families in the involvement in student learning and in becoming partners in the learning process.

Parenting. Epstein, et al. (2002) focus on how schools can work with families on parenting skills. Strategies for parenting support home conditions to support learning (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). Schools provide information that parents may need regarding health, nutrition, schooling services, and other services and this type of involvement is supporting parents in creating a home that supports the student. This is where home visits and being open to family culture, literacy, and funds of knowledge will be useful (Epstein, et al., 2002; Moll,

Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992). Schools can also provide family literacy support, GED services, and college credits to those families interested (Epstein, et al., 2002). Improving home support can improve attendance, awareness of school importance, help balance school and home responsibilities for students, strengthen the feeling of school support and bring awareness to parents of the importance of sharing the valuable information they possess about their child (Epstein, et al., 2002). In order to ensure that families receive the support they need there needs to be effective communication, trust, and reliability between families and educators or schools. When educators are open to listening to families, getting to know their strengths, and their needs, they have better opportunities to develop relationships that allow teachers and schools to individualize the support needed. Understanding families and their funds of knowledge, as well as what supports they need, begins to bridge the gaps between home and school and builds relationships that are more welcoming and inclusive (González, Moll, Floyd-Tenery, Rivera, Rendon, Gonzales, & Amanti, 1993). This can develop better home-school relationships and support families in feeling more comfortable in the school setting that will provide support to them when needed.

Communicating. Focusing on communication is another type of involvement that Epstein, et al. (2002) discusses. Schools can communicate with families about school programs and progress made by the student through high quality two-way communication such as using translators, interpreters (Wassell, et al., 2017) and use a variety of communication methods like written notes, phone calls, video calls, translated newsletters and face to face meetings at local community centers (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). All communication with families should be either written in home languages, or provided in home language through an interpreter or bilingual staff (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). In analyzing families' funds of knowledge,

school staff can better understand the best approaches to communicating with families to build relationships and discuss students' learning. Families are rich in resources for their children's learning (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992). Open communication with parents about their child's success should be shared with parents in means that are preferred by them and frequently to ensure good communication (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008).When educators work to develop better communication with families and have the resources to communicate effectively with families, this shows families that they are a valuable and important part of the learning team and that it is important that they are heard and understand information about their child's learning. Epstein, et al. (2002) suggests scheduling parent-student pickup of report cards or progress reports that include a conference on progress and improvements. With knowledge of families' literacy and language skills, educators can make considerations for parents who do not read, or write and who may need other accommodations (Epstein, et al., 2002). These areas of improvement for communication as suggested by Epstein, et al. (2002) can result in student awareness of their own skills and progress and allows parents to monitor and possess awareness of student progress and school programs and policies. Open communication with families as well as students, allows for open and honest communication, opportunities to build mutual trust, develop relationships, and give students and families a place and say in learning.

Volunteering. Another type of involvement that schools can focus on as discussed by Epstein, et al. (2002) is recruiting efforts to involve families as volunteers and audiences (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). This can be seen through making schedules for family volunteering flexible and to allow all parents the opportunity to participate Epstein, et al. (2002). This also provides opportunities for educators and other school staff to learn about parents' strengths and skills and acknowledges parents' cultural values, and learning what strengths they have can make

bringing their skills to the school community more welcoming (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Epstein, et al., 2002). Learning families' funds of knowledge gives educators a bigger picture of who families are, what they value, and how to best support them (González, et al., 1993). Families have different schedules, obligations, and conflicts. Having knowledge of this can support teachers and other school staff in better developing ways to involve, engage, and invite families into their child's learning and into the school and classroom community.

Arias & Morillo-Campbell (2008) suggest, to give families the best opportunities to engage in student learning, educators should provide flexible times for meetings, provide different means of meeting, offer solutions for transportation issues and/or plan times around transportation needs. In doing so, teachers are providing parents the opportunity to be present for these meetings to discuss student growth together in an open way where both parties are respected and understood (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). Providing support for families that makes engagement in their child's learning accessible to them gives families a stance in their

Learning at Home. The fourth area involves families in their child's learning activities at home, such as homework (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). This can be achieved by teachers providing homework help phone numbers with translation services and thoughtful and respectful encouragement of families to participate in student learning at home. Teachers and administration should also be thinking and planning the homework assignments and tasks sent home and the level of academic and language support needed for success with these assignments (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Wassell, et al., 2017). According to Chavkin & Williams Jr. (1989), providing students with assignments to complete at home (homework or projects) that are accessible to families and parents can increase the opportunities for families to support students' learning. This also allows students to recognize that parent involvement is important

and helps build connections between home and school (Chavkin & Williams Jr., 1989). Supporting families' language needs does more than just making information available to families. Effectively communicating with families supports the development of relationships between families, teachers, and schools to better support the students' learning needs and experiences.

Schools can also provide support for parents in learning subjects to assist students at home using L1 or home language which can also be provided through language training for parents if desired (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Chavkin & Williams Jr., 1989). When educators capitalize on families' funds of knowledge, they can better organize and develop quality instruction outside the classroom that emphasizes families strengths and skills (Moll, et al., 1992). Understanding families' funds of knowledge to develop assignments and support for families to engage in their child's learning at home and gives families a positive view of the household as containing ample resources and skills (Moll, et al., 1992). By developing a deeper and more meaningful understanding of families by learning their funds of knowledge, there is more opportunity for educators to individualize assignments that promote family support at home and family confidence.

Decision Making. Schools can also involve parents in the school decision making, governance, and advocacy through organizations providing a voice for their child's learning (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Wassell, et al., 2017). Providing opportunities for parents and families to become more familiar with the school setting can help those families who are unfamiliar with U.S. schools or formal schooling. Schools can provide families with community partners who can help families approach schools more easily and also provide times for families to informally visit the school setting to get to know staff and look around and ask questions

(Albrecht, 2021; Chavkin & Williams Jr., 1989). There is a common myth that, “Mexican immigrants have poor education backgrounds” (González, et al., 1993, p. 11). However, with understanding of a family's funds of knowledge, educators can better understand families and avoid falling victim to these types of myths and misconceptions. Developing understanding for families' educational, professional, and skilled backgrounds and histories can help schools and teachers support families more individually in becoming part of the school community and engaging in their children’s learning.

Collaboration with the Community. Finally, Epstein, et al. (2002), suggests that educators collaborate with the community. Collaboration with community based agencies such as community health, recreations, and cultural services are among some of the few examples. Educators can collaborate with colleges to provide families with programs and courses that link to learning skills, talents, or interests. Educators and other staff working with families can support families in the learning process through learning together as a community (Albrecht, 2021). Schools and teachers can develop ways to provide information and support regarding services to the community to help families better understand them and participate in them. Services such as recycling, art, music, drama, senior activities, and sports teams or clubs (Epstein, et al., 2002). Knowing families' funds of knowledge gives those in the school community the means to better support families. Gaining valuable knowledge about families' backgrounds, interests, strengths, and building relationships, helps decide how to best support each family and each member individually. With a better connection between school, home and community, this provides families with opportunities to engage in their child’s learning more openly and confidently.

Epstein's Intended Results. Epstein, et al. (2002) discusses the results for improving support for families in the learning process (Appendix C). Students' can develop increased talents and skills through extra curricular experiences, gain awareness of careers and future options, and connect to their communities. It is also stated that parents' knowledge and use of local resources should increase as well as the talents of families to obtain these resources. This also brings awareness to families of the school's role in the community and how the community contributes to the school (Epstein, et al., 2002).

Home Visits

The key to providing these supports and strategies for overcoming barriers in family engagement is using families' strengths and funds of knowledge to make the learning environment more welcoming and individualized . Home visits are one way to gain information about families' strengths that provide information for educators in developing a warm, caring, and receptive environment and appropriate support (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Pushor, 2012). Educators can learn about students' home language, acknowledging families' cultural values, and transfer funds of knowledge from the home landscape to the learning landscape (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Pushor, 2012). This also provides educators an opportunity to listen to families about how they feel most comfortable collaborating and being involved in their child's learning (Albrecht, 2021). Home visits allow educators to enter families' homes. The goal is for educators to enter the home as a learner, ready and willing to interact and document information that will aid in developing a firsthand account of the knowledge the family and community hold (González, et al., 1993). Educators should be open to developing deeper and clearer understanding of students and their families as a whole. It is important for educators to take time to construct their understanding of students' and families' strengths, values, culture,

education, talents, interests, histories, literacy, schedules, and views. In doing so, there is more individualized support in learning, parenting, community engagement, and engagement in education.

Conclusion

English language learners often have many challenges stacked against them. Students are often new to schools, unfamiliar with the school system or formal schooling, and face language barriers. The same goes for their families. Families are often unfamiliar with the educational systems, face language barriers, have different views of educational roles, lack confidence in supporting at home, and face sidelining within schools. Repeated research has shown educators want to provide this community of students and their families with the means to access their learning in ways that connect to family cultures, show respect, and that promote family engagement in learning. With the student at the center focus, schools, families, and communities need to work collaboratively with open communication between the home and school to best support ELLs. The literature reviewed in this chapter supports the design of the product and tool for educators that is explained further in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: The Product and Tools

In this chapter I will present a detailed description and rationale for a product and tool informed by research and information discussed previously in the Chapter 2 literature review. The product for this capstone will take the form of a 30 minute recorded webinar session (Appendix G) which includes a presentation of slides (Appendix F) which focus on increasing parent and family engagement in the education of English language learners (ELLs). In addition to this webinar, this capstone will include a downloadable resource, the Teacher Toolbox (Appendix D). The intended audience for the webinar and tool is open to all educators and schools staff. It is important for all educators to have skills to work with ELLs and their families because, "the reality is that most, if not all teachers have or can expect to have ELL students in their classrooms and therefore must be prepared to best support these children" (Samson & Collins, 2012, p.1). All who work with students in the school setting, inservice or pre-service, can benefit from the information presented.

The product and tool have been developed based on the literature review focused on ELL education and family engagement. The webinar has been designed to be an interactive, reflective, and proactive engagement for the participants. Both the tool and the product are designed with the intention to support school staff in meeting the needs of students and their families to enrich the learning of ELL students.

Description of the Product

The webinar product is a 30 minute recorded video available to the public titled, "Empowering Engagement in English Language Learner Families". The product is designed for an audience consisting of classroom, ENL (English as a New Language), and special area teachers (art, music, physical education, etc.), content specialists (reading or math), as well as

principals and any pre-service educators. It is intended for use in the summer before the school-year starts. In conjunction with the webinar, a Teacher Toolbox (Appendix D) is available as a downloadable PDF. The Toolbox provides a collection of strategies and supports teachers can use that can be implemented early in the year and incorporated into plans during weeks before school begins. These strategies will correspond with those discussed in the webinar and will be explained later in this chapter.

The webinar begins with participating viewers taking a moment to reflect on their own experiences with family engagement in school. Participants are presented with 2 questions, each with a prompt to pause and reflect between them; *How do you encourage and engage ELL families in student learning?* and *What challenges do you see or face regarding family engagement with ELL students?* These guiding discussion questions are designed to encourage groups to discuss ideas, experiences, and concerns.

The following sections will discuss main topics included in the webinar and the Teacher Toolbox. These sections act as categories designed to organize strategies for schools to empower ELL family engagement in their children's learning and support student development and success. These sections were chosen based on challenges ELL families face and strategies for overcoming these challenges which were presented in the literature review in Chapter 2. Each subsection below includes a description, a detailed rationale based on findings in the literature, ideas for implementing, and the perceived outcome.

Getting to Know Families

This category presents the importance of getting to know students and families with the purpose of being well equipped with the knowledge needed as an educator to build relationships and reach all families in a meaningful way. Pushor (2012) states that, when educators take the

time to know children in the context of their homes, families, and communities, they see the strength and knowledge held in the household that can be brought into the school space. This helps develop an environment where the student and their families consider themselves a part of the learning community and encourage learning (Pushor, 2012). One way educators can learn about families is through home visits. Moll, et al. (1992) suggest home visits that are open and are a learning experience for educators. They discuss looking for funds of knowledge present in the home, which they describe as "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and wellbeing" (p 133). Some sample funds of knowledge areas that Moll, et al. (1992) suggest to look at during home visits are:

- Agriculture: animal management, gardening, hunting, or equipment management;
- Scientific Knowledge: construction, car repair, or house maintenance;
- Economics: renting, sales, or labor laws;
- Medicine: contemporary, herbal, or first aid;
- Household Management: childcare, cooking, budget, or appliance repairs;
- Religion.

I chose to include this section and sample strategy because, Pushor (2012) states, home visits and learning more about families and their funds of knowledge gives educators the opportunities to build mutual respect and understanding with families and to develop relationships creating richer learning experiences. A challenge faced by ELL families was reported by Shim (2013) to be a feeling of judgment from schools as well as feeling that their intelligence is low because they do not speak English (Shim, 2013). Building a connection with families and learning about the skills and values they have outside of the classroom and school community can create a bigger picture

of who that child is and help families engage in the child's learning with a more individualized approach.

Communication and Meetings

Family's lack of English proficiency is seen to be one of the biggest barriers between ELL families, parental information, and family engagement (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn, & Van Voorhis (2002) states that designing effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications can help build progress awareness, help families understand policies and expectations, assist in making informed decisions about learning, and bring awareness to roles in student's education. Epstein, et al. (2002) discusses sample practices that can be implemented into the school setting to support communication with families. Samples provided by Epstein, et al. (2002) are provided below:

- Provide appropriate language translation as needed;
- Encourage families to pick-up report cards to conference about the information;
- Send schedules, memos, newsletters, and notices home regularly;
- Provide clear information about school policy and information;
- Openly communicating goals for students with family participation and input.

The above samples can be implemented by schools through the use of translation services and hotlines and communication applications such as Talking Points that will take messages in English and translate them into the families' desired language.

A key concern to consider when implementing any communication strategy with ELL families is the families literacy skills in the language spoken at home. Epstein, et al. (2002) cautions to be aware that some families who are speakers of other languages are just that, speakers of the language and may have low or no reading or writing skills in that language. Thus,

providing translated documents and messages for these families would not be a useful strategy. Considering this information, different strategies will be needed for families who are not proficient in reading and writing in their home language. Some of these strategies include: video conferencing with a translator, phone calls with support of translation hotlines, or even using a translation website with a text-to-speech and speech-to-text option. These strategies support families who may not have proficient reading or writing skills in their home language as Epstein, et al. (2002) cautions.

In addition to communication challenges, ELL parents often hold labor intensive work schedules that limit their availability and flexibility in attending events that are held at certain times of the day or night and some families may have limited transportation availability (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). Supporting families to engage in their child's learning includes providing families with opportunities to meet and discuss the child, progress, and any concerns. Arias & Morillo-Campbell (2008) offers possible solutions such as: offering a variety of meeting times during the day and at night, and working with families to plan meetings and events around transportation needs such as bus schedules, or car availability.

From the literature review in Chapter 2 it was clear that communication and availability were prominent challenges faced by ELL families that often restricted engagement in student education. Using suggestions from literature and personal experience with ELL families, the above strategies can be used to improve family engagement in student learning.

Homework Support

Although formal education of parents does not create as large of a barrier compared to other barriers, this is still seen to be a challenge in some ELL families. According to Wassell, Hawrylak, & Scantlebury (2015), this lack of formal education was seen to become a challenge

when students were in need of homework or project support at home and parents were unfamiliar with the content and language of the assignment. It was also expressed that families might also become embarrassed or intimidated when confronted with their children's homework (Wassell, et al., 2017). Parent's reported in a survey conducted by Chavkin and Williams Jr. (1989), that they wanted teachers to provide more support with how to help with homework.

Some supports suggested in literature by Epstein, et al. (2002) include: providing information on how to monitor student's homework completion, regular scheduled homeworks that require students to discuss with families their learning, and assignments for students and families to do together or in the community. Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) also discuss that homework assignments should be planned with ELL families in mind and encourage family engagement. Such actions as planning assignments that require less levels of academic and language support can be supportive of family engagement.

With this information from the literature review, a suggested support based on my own experiences is for teachers to give parents ways they can support their child's learning at home such as giving space for them to work, providing encouragement, and checking for completion of homework assignments. Another suggestion for teachers is to plan assignments that use families strengths and incorporate the academic content (ie. gardening or farming linked to area, perimeter, life cycle of plants, or pollination) to best support students' knowledge and value strength of family member's knowledge as well. Assignments that ask students to include families, such as interviews, biographies, timelines, and other individualized assignments can also make the content more accessible for families when support is needed, as well as including families in the process of the work as well.

Providing families with the tools and information to support their children in their homework and provide them with access to the content allows families to engage in the learning experience and provide input for their child as well. Giving families the opportunity to support their children and be a part of their learning is an important piece to stronger family engagement.

In providing these supports for families and students, there is a hope that there will be an increase in positive attitudes toward schoolwork, more completed homeworks and deeper understanding of content, as well as students seeing their existing knowledge as valuable (Epstein, et al., 2002). Increasing positive attitudes toward learning at home can transfer over into learning at school. If families see value and are confident in supporting their children there is a hope that this will transfer over into their attitudes toward schools. Schools and educators who consider families in their planning show a certain respect and understanding for each other, building that relationship as well.

From the Chapter 2 literature review it was evident that homework and academic support at home were both areas of great concern for many ELL families that resulted in families feeling as though they could not support their children's learning and were not engaged in their education. Literature and personal experience with ELL families informed the above strategies that are included in the Webinar and the Teacher Toolbox for this product to encourage family engagement.

School Community

Another common reason behind low ELL family engagement is families' cultural views of education. It is not uncommon that in some families' cultural beliefs, teachers and parents hold separate roles in the education process (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). Some families

view parents as those who nurture, teach values, and instill good behaviors into the children, while the educator has the role of teaching academic content (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008).

From the literature written by Epstein, et al. (2002) there are some suggested strategies that schools can use in engaging families in the student learning process and creating a strong school community between schools, families, and the community. Such strategies that Epstein, et al. (2002) suggests to include families into the school community are:

- Invitations and encouragement to participate in parent organization that give parents the opportunity to be leaders in student learning and decision making;
- Vote for school representatives with information provided to them in their preferred method.

In encouraging families to get involved and engage in parent organizations, it is also important for schools to take into consideration the language barrier as well. Providing families with translators or introducing to others who speak similar home languages in the group as well can be helpful. Literature from Pushor (2012) informed a strategy that encourages schools and educators valuing and seeking out parent expertise on their children and openly discussing home and school comparisons in behavior, academics, and language use.

According to Panferov (2010), another barrier that ELL families often face is the parent's educational experience with formal schooling. Navigating school systems in the U.S. can be daunting or challenging for newcomers (Panferov, 2008). Schools can support families who may face these challenges in providing them with the opportunities to build connections with other families in the school community who can provide information in the home language or help families feel more comfortable approaching the schools by giving families the time to come to the school, meet the staff, look around, ask questions (with the appropriate language support),

and get a feel for the supports within the school itself (Albrecht, 2021;Chavkin & Williams Jr., 1989). Some families may be embarrassed about their limited schooling and may be uneasy around educators and staff (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008).

Making the school a safe and welcoming place that works with families to form a community can help families in being more comfortable with the school. Families begin to feel like a valuable part of the community when they have the opportunity to share their experiences, strengths, and expertise with others and work toward a common goal with educators and school staff (Pushor, 2012).

The literature review in Chapter 2 provided evidence that ELL families often do not feel welcomed into the school community and are sometimes unfamiliar with the school system itself and this hinders their ability and willingness to engage in children's learning.

Community Resources

As stated by Epstein, et at. (2002), strong education is the overlap of three spheres of influence, family, school, and community that influence students and play a part in their learning and development. The interaction among these three spheres provides more opportunities for learners. Based on this theory by Espstein, et al. (2002), suggestions can be made to support family engagement through the connections in school and the community. Some of those suggestions are as follows:

- Providing families with support programs for training (GED, college credits, family literacy) with appropriate language supports;
- Connecting families with individuals to support with nutrition and health services;
- Inform families of community programs for students (mentoring, tutoring)
- Connect families to community activities.

Epstein, et al. (2002) begins to outline some helpful strategies for connecting families to community resources that can be useful. These strategies combined with my own experiences developed some ideas that could also be useful in supporting ELL families through community services.

One of these strategies that stems from Epstein, et al. (2002) is for teachers to research and collect information (addresses, phone numbers, qualification information) for useful services around the district and compile them into a digital and printable format. Some services that could be included are: bus stations, taxi services, multi-lingual doctors or dentists, pharmacys, shelters, food pantries, and libraries. The form could also include useful numbers for the school such as counselors, social workers, and translation services. By providing families with useful information about the community that can support student learning and family wellbeing there is a feeling of support from school, an increase in family interactions with other families in the community, and community activities to build education and skills for the whole family.

Evidence from the literature review in Chapter 2 informed that stronger interactions and connections between schools, families, and the community provide stronger opportunities for ELL learning and family engagement. Providing participants with these strategies allows for more opportunities in engaging families in student learning.

Purpose

The decision in selecting to include these categories to inform the information provided in my webinar product and the Teacher Toolbox came from the evidence found in the Chapter 2 literature review. Providing teachers with strategies and ideas for implementing better opportunities for parent engagement was important to me in the development of this product. With reflection of teachers' current means to engaging parents and this product and tool, it is my

hope that teachers will find ways to encourage family engagement in their students' learning environments to see an increase in family engagement. Giving teachers a physical copy of strategies, as provided in the Teacher Toolbox, gives them the starting point of implementing strategies supported by literature in the field. The Teacher Toolbox by no means is a complete collection of strategies, but rather somewhere to start and a place for participants to continue the discussion and continually add to and adjust.

In Person Professional Development

This webinar product (Appendix G) and the corresponding Teacher Toolbox (Appendix B) are designed to also be used as a professional development (PD) if desired by schools, districts, or departments. The professional development model is planned for the same audience of teachers, administration, and pre-service teachers. The PD consists of three sessions. The first session is to be held in the summer before the school year begins. This allows for time to plan and start the year with a structure set for empowering family engagement. All PD sessions should ideally be held in a location with round or square tables that allow for open and balanced communication among group members. These groups will be heterogeneous, including educators of different grades and specialties and will consist of 4-5 members each. For the PD model, the webinar can be played to the group and when suggested to pause and discuss, groups will do so with each other.

Each group will be provided with one paper that will have the two questions written on them: *How do you encourage and engage ELL families in student learning?* and *What challenges do you see or face regarding family engagement with ELL students?* Participants are given time to discuss with their group and take a few notes to share. Once groups have had time to discuss, they can share any concerns or challenges they have regarding engagement with ELL families.

Once this is complete the webinar can continue. Throughout the PD, the Teacher Toolbox will be referenced. This should be distributed to participants or sent out prior to the PD. After the session, participants are encouraged to keep, reference, and use the Teacher Toolbox to guide their planning for engagement in the upcoming school year. The Toolbox's Notes and Reflections columns allow teachers to jot notes for each tool and this is encouraged at the end of PD session one.

The second session of the PD will be held mid-school-year, around late December to Mid-January. This PD session is planned around what is needed by the participants. The same participants will return and in this session with their Teacher Toolbox and they will reflect and share. Participants will discuss in similar group structures but with new groups and will be given prompts to guide their discussion (Appendix E). The purpose of this session is for the participants to actively reflect on their practices and efforts and to also see what is working for others and what can be adjusted. Participants of the PD will be encouraged to continue working toward empowering family engagement in ELL learning.

The final session for the professional development will be held close to the end of the school-year around the end of May to the beginning of June. The purpose of this session is to give participants time to discuss and reflect on their efforts for empowering family engagement in ELL learning and also share how it affected the year, their teaching, and the school community. This final session will allow participants to share final strategies that worked, tools they developed or found that worked, express their concerns moving forward, and big ideas going into the next school-year.

Intended Outcome

The intended outcome for this product and tool is for there to be an increase in teachers, administrators, and specialists taking action to empower families to engage in student's learning. With participants using the tool and product as described, and with honesty and passion, the intended outcome is that schools and families will see an increase in family participation and engagement in the school community and student learning. When implemented appropriately, it is intended that schools, families, and communities notice a more respectful relationship among them with increased understanding. With future use of the product and tool, I would like to see participants further developing ideas and strategies and sharing out their success and continued challenges.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

This capstone project has explored the lack of English language learner (ELL) family engagement in schools by addressing the following research question: *Why do educators encounter low family engagement in English language learner families?* and *How can educators empower families to engage in their children's learning?* Using these questions as a guide through the various research available, evidence proved that families play a major role in student success in learning. Increased family involvement leads to increased student success, family and teacher satisfaction, and improved school climate (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017). The project also examined and developed strategies to empower families of ELLs to engage in their children's learning.

Conclusions

I have reviewed various literature on the topic of limited ELL family engagement in school which aimed to answer these questions. From the literature, I found that there are many different reasons for limited family engagement in ELL families. Language barriers, limited knowledge of the family, differing views on educational roles, family educational experiences, and feeling of inclusion into the community are some of the major reasons for this problem. The literature also showed various approaches that educators and schools could develop and implement to empower their ELL families to engage in their child's learning and improve the child's academic and behavioral progress (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017). Using the possible reasons for the problem to inform and develop the possible solutions was one way the review was used in this project. Translation tools, home visits (Moll, et al., 1992), open communication, and viewing families as partners with expertise in their child's learning (Pushor, 201) help support parents and empower them to engage in learning.

Understanding Diverse Families to Clarify Misconceptions

From the information provided in the literature review I found that there lies great importance in learning about families and strengths and skills they hold outside of the classroom (Moll, et al., 1992; Pushor, 2012). This provides educators with the knowledge and tools they can use to then reach families and the students more appropriately and individually. Building background knowledge about why a family seems to be distant from their child's learning is the first step. Understanding diverse families helps limit the misconceptions attached to these families and begins to help educators and schools support them. As educators, it is important not to clump all ELLs and ELL families together. Every family is different, has different struggles and different strengths. Knowing what they need support in and developing ways to support is an important start. This product and tool are intended to provide educators with a place to start. In providing educators and schools with insight as to why they can then narrow their goals and solutions using the ones in the tool as guides or points to begin brainstorming other strategies.

Families as Valuable Team Members

Throughout the review of the various literature, I discovered the value in how educators approach family engagement. Pushor (2012) emphasizes the meaning of family engagement. The strategies, supports, and possible solutions for this problem presented in this project, product, and tool are all developed or selected based on this idea. Family engagement is more than families attending events and answering phone calls. It is the job of the educator or school to engage families in their children's learning. This goes beyond family attendance. Looking at families as useful members of the students learning team and using what they know and can contribute to support the child's learning. Thinking of families as a partner and team member actively giving input, making decisions, and supporting their child effectively is what is meant

by empowering families to engage (Pushor, 2012). Although the product and tool do address areas such as conferences and events, it is developed throughout the product and tool that families are supported to do more than just attend and to be a valuable member of the learning team.

Educating Teachers to Understand Diverse Families

Finding how educators can empower ELL families to engage in student learning showed me the disconnect between what educators know should be done and what is actually being done. Wassell, Hawrylak, & Scantlebury's (2015) study of sixth grade STEM teachers highlighted this disconnect that I had also noticed in my own experiences working with ELLs and ENL teachers. Informing and educating teachers and school staff of the different ways families can engage and work toward changing the view of ELL families who may get caught in misconceptions of not caring or not valuing education (Chávez-Reyes, 2010) due to lack of information. It is important for educators to be informed of possible reasons why ELL families may not be engaging in their child's learning in order to truly understand families and then provide them with the support and tools to be able to act and help solve the problem. The product and tool presented in this project act as a starting point for teachers to get educated, inspire deeper research, and reflect on what family engagement really looks like and how to improve this in their own teaching.

Increased Engagement for All

When used with honesty and passion, the product and tool found in this project are intended to increase actions taken by educators and others who work with ELLs and their families to empower family engagement in student learning. This increase in action, when implemented appropriately, families, schools, and communities should notice better relationships

due to the increased understanding all around. By providing the product and tool found in this project, schools and teachers will be better equipped with meaningful and concise information that will spark some new thinking about how to engage ELL families in education. The tool allows schools and educators to reflect on their current methods of engaging families and use the product as a tool for change. With future use of the product and tool, I would like to see participants further developing ideas and strategies with intentions to share their success and continued challenges to grow and develop as a community. It is intended that with increased family engagement there will be an increase in student engagement as well.

Implications for Student Learning

Limited ELL family engagement in learning is a problem because families play a major part in student success in learning (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017). Supporting the students' learning is the main goal and this product and tool help do that. When family engagement is increased, students benefit academically, socially, and behaviorally (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017). The product and tool discuss the importance of getting to know families outside of school and learning their strengths and skills. When educators take the initiative to do this by making home visits or conferencing with families openly, the student is understood as a person, beyond being a student. That student has a collection of strengths and knowledge that may not have appeared in the classroom setting. However, with this information known by those who work closely with the student, this provides opportunities for children to show their understanding.

Increasing family engagement can also provide students with better family-school connections. Bridging a boundary between the school academics and home life, and building a better relationship with learning. Developing the view of learning being a life-long and fluid act both in and out of the classroom. This can also develop students' views of their parents as

valuable resources for knowledge in the classroom and outside as well. Developing activities for students that connect with family knowledge gives families time to develop learning relationships together and build respect and see value in each other. Another benefit for students that is possible from the concepts in the project is increased attendance and learning. When families are openly shown and informed about the schooling process, policies, and supports given by teachers, there can be a decrease in absences due to better understanding of school community and the supports being given to the student (Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn, & Van Voorhis, 2002).

Increased family engagement for ELLs can also lead to better school relationships and learning experiences. When teachers are informed and able to individualize learning for students and show positive engagement with families and relationships, students may begin to feel more comfortable in the school environment, take more risks, and ask more questions. Students tend to feel a part of the community because their families feel more a part of the community. This product and tool provide ways to make students and their families feel more welcomed into the school community as well as the outside community.

Implications for Teachers

This product informs educators, bringing attention to the issue, providing support for family engagement, and allows for even better advocacy. The tool provided with the product was developed with growth for teachers at the center. As an educator, I recognize the importance of effectively informing and teaching ways to improve. The tool, informed by the literature review, provides benefits for ENL teachers, classroom teachers, principals, and any others working closely with ELLs and their families.

Educators benefit from using this tool and product to empower ELL family engagement through the development of deeper and better understood relationships. These relationships are built from time, patience, and open communication emphasized in the process of empowering families. In building deeper, more understood relationships with families and students, teachers are equipped with more background information about families strengths and knowledge that can help individualize learning activities, assignments, and assessments. This also gives educators information about what students already know that they may not have found out by only viewing the student in the classroom. Relationships with families help teachers better accommodate families, such as transportation, scheduling, language, and literacy (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). Building better connections with families and providing them with the information they need can increase student attendance and attitudes toward learning and in turn increase teachers time for meaningful and individualized teaching.

Sharing the information and research found in the product and tool benefit ENL (English as a New Language) teachers in their efforts to develop understanding of ELL students and share their information with classroom teachers, administration, faculty, and specialty teachers. ENL teachers are strong advocates for their students and are often alone in their plight to make connections with all their students' families a be the connection between families, students, and other school community members. Sharing this product and tool, more members of children’s learning are informed and equipped with ways to support and connect, allowing for better advocacy and giving ENL teachers support in working with colleagues to support the students' learning and support families, rather than doing it all alone.

Recommendations

In my search for literature to review within this project, I found some informative information. However, I also found that there was a lack of literature that provided data from empirical research. Within my product I felt that I was missing statistics and data to provide outcomes of implementing family engagement strategies specifically for ELL students. I found that most research and literature was focused on non-ELLs. Though I found some of this information to transfer to ELLs as well, I did find that there were specific areas where the information was lacking such as effects on student language development. I believe that in the area of ELL family engagement, more empirical research needs to be done on the effects of students' academics, language development, and behavior. I also believe that more teacher accounts of implementing engagement strategies and the reflections of their success or continued development should be provided as well. Hearing how teachers are making an effort and how those are working or not working is important for other educators to know.

Final Thoughts

English language learners and their families are often placed under misconceptions related to education. Too often families are thought of as not engaging in their children's education because they do not value education or schooling. Believing misconceptions like this does not work to remove barriers for ELL families. These beliefs allow things like language, understanding of the school system, and schedules to keep families from effectively engaging in the education of their children (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Panferov, 2010; Wassell, Hawrylak, & Scantlebury, 2015). Empowering families to engage in their children's learning can increase relationships between the school, teachers, and families creating a more supportive environment for the learner where all involved have the same central goal, to help the student

grow and develop (Epstein, et al, 2012). Home and school environments that offer open communication, support, understanding, and respect provide students, families, and teachers with great space to grow together.

References

Albrecht, D. (2021). The journey from traditional parent involvement to an alliance for empowerment: A paradigm shift. *Theory Into Practice*, *60*(1), 7-17. doi: 10.1080/00405841.2020.1827897

Arias, M.B., & Morillo-Campbell, M. (2008). Promoting ELL parental involvement: Challenges in contested times. *Education Public Interest Center.* Arizona State University.

Chávez-Reyes, C. (2010). Inclusive approach to parent engagement for young English language learners and their families. *National Society for the Study of Education, 109*(2), 574-504.

Chavkin, N.F., & Williams Jr., D.L. (1989). Low income parents' attitudes toward parent involvement in education. *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare, 16*(3), 17-28.

Colorín Colorado. (2015, December 1). *Homework Tips for Parents of ELLs*. Colorín Colorado. https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/homework-tips-parents-ells

Durisic, M. & Bunijevac, M. (2017). Parental involvement as a important factor for successful Education. *CEPS Journal*, *7*(3), 137-153.

Epstein, J., Sanders, M.G., Simon, B.S., Salinas, K.C., Jansorn, N.R. & Van Voorhis, F.L. (2002). *School, family, and community partnership: Your handbook for action.* Sage Publication.

Ferlazzo, L. (2011, May 1). *Involvement or Engagement?*. ASCD. https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/involvement-or-engagement

González, N., Moll, L.C., Floyd-Tenery, M., Rivera, A., Rendon, P., Gonzales, R. & Amanti, C. (1993). *Teacher research on funds of knowledge: Learning from households* (Report No. 6). National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning. https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5tm6x7cm

González, N., Moll, L.C., & Amanti, C. (2005). *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in*

households, communities, and classrooms. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Hogg, L. (2011). Funds of knowledge: An investigation of coherence within the literature. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 27*(3), 666-677. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2010.11.005

Knight, S. & Gilpatrick, M. (2019). ELL families: Myths, truths and strategies for engagement. *Journal of English Learner Education*, *9*(1).https://stars.library.ucf.edu/cgi /viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=jele

Mitchel, C. (2020, February 18). *The Nation's English-Learner Population has Surged: 3 Things to Know*. Education Week. https://www.edweek.org/leadership/the-nations-english-learner-population-has-surged-3-things-to-know/2020/02

Moll, L.C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & González, N., (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect classrooms. *Theory Into Practice, 31*(2), 132-141.

Panferov, S. (2010). Increasing ELL parental involvement in our schools: Learning from the parents. *Theory Into Practice,* (49), 106-112. Doi: 10.1090/00405841003626551

Pushor, D. (2012). Tracing my research on parent engagement: Working to interrupt the story of school as a protectorate. *Action in Teacher Education, 34*, 464-479.

Samson, J.F. & Collins, B.A. (2012). *Preparing all teachers to meet the needs of English language learners applying research to policy and practice for teacher effectiveness.* Center for American Progress.

Shim, J.M. (2013). Involving the parents of English language learners in a rural area: Focus on the dynamics of teacher-parent interactions. *Rural Educator, 34*(3), 18-26.

United States Department of Education Office of English Language Acquisition. (2020). *English*

Learners: Demographic Trends [Digital]. www.ED.gov. https://ncela.ed.gov/files/fast_facts/19-0193_Del4.4_ELDemographicTrends_021220_508.pdf

U.S. Department of Education. (2018, October 25). *How to Help with Homework: Monitor Assignments*. Colorín Colorado. https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/how-help-homework-monitor-assignments

Wassell, B.A., Hawrylak, M.F., & Scantlebury, K. (2017). Arrears, resources, frustrations, and empathy: Teachers' expectations for families involvement for latino/a ELL students in urban STEM classrooms. *Urban Education*, *52*(10), 1233-1254.

Zuazo-Legido, E.I. (2008). *Impact of participation in a community based, even start literacy program on school achievement and parent involvement for English language learners* (515). [Thesis, Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine] Digital Commons.

Appendix A:

Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement: Sample Practices

TABLE 1.1.1 Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement for Comprehensive Programs of Partnership and Sample Practices

Type 1 Parenting	*Type 2 Communicating*	*Type 3 Volunteering*	*Type 4 Learning at Home*	*Type 5 Decision Making*	*Type 6 Collaborating With the Community*
Help all families establish home environments to support children as students	Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and their children's progress	Recruit and organize parent help and support	Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning	Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives	Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development
			Sample Practices		
Suggestions for home conditions that support learning at each grade level Workshops, videotapes, computerized phone messages on parenting and child rearing for each age and grade level Parent education and other courses or training for parents (e.g., GED, college credit, family literacy) Family support programs to assist families with health, nutrition, and other services Home visits at transition points to preschool, elementary, middle, and high school; neighborhood meetings to help families understand schools and to help schools understand families	Conferences with every parent at least once a year, with follow-ups as needed Language translators assist families, as needed Weekly or monthly folders of student work sent home for review and comments Parent-student pickup of report cards, with conferences on improving grades Regular schedule of useful notices, memos, phone calls, newsletters, and other communications Clear information on choosing schools or courses, programs, and activities within schools Clear information on all school policies, programs, reforms, and transitions	School and classroom volunteer program to help teachers, administrators, students, and other parents Parent room or family center for volunteer work, meetings, and resources for families Annual postcard survey to identify all available talents, times, and locations of volunteers Class parent, telephone tree, or other structures to provide all families with needed information Parent patrols or other activities to aid safety and operation of school programs	Information for families on skills required for students in all subjects at each grade Information on homework policies and how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home Information on how to assist students to improve skills on various class and school assessments Regular schedule of homework that requires students to discuss and interact with families on what they are learning in class Calendars with activities for parents and students to do at home or in the community Family math, science, and reading activities at school Summer learning packets or activities Family participation in setting student goals each year and in planning for college or work	Active PTA/PTO or other parent organizations, advisory councils, or committees (e.g., curriculum, safety, personnel) for parent leadership and participation Independent advocacy groups to lobby and work for school reform and improvements District-level councils and committees for family and community involvement Information on school or local elections for school representatives Networks to link all families with parent representatives	Information for students and families on community health, cultural, recreational, social support, and other programs or services Information on community activities that link to learning skills and talents, including summer programs for students Service integration through partnerships involving school; civic, counseling, cultural, health, recreation, and other agencies and organizations; and businesses Service to the community by students, families, and schools (e.g., recycling, art, music, drama, and other activities for seniors or others) Participation of alumni in school programs for students

(Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn, & Van Voorhis, 2002)

Appendix B:

Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement: Challenges

TABLE 1.1.2 Challenges and Redefinitions for the Successful Design and Implementation of the Six Types of Involvement

Challenges					
Type 1 Parenting	***Type 2 Communicating***	***Type 3 Volunteering***	***Type 4 Learning at Home***	***Type 5 Decision Making***	***Type 6 Collaborating With the Community***
Provide information to all families who want it or who need it, not just to the few who can attend workshops or meetings at the school building Enable families to share information about culture, background, and children's talents and needs Make sure that all information for families is clear, usable, and linked to children's success in school	Review the readability, clarity, form, and frequency of all memos, notices, and other print and nonprint communications Consider parents who do not speak English well, do not read well, or need large type Review the quality of major communications (e.g., the schedule, content, and structure of conferences; newsletters; report cards; and others) Establish clear two-way channels for communications from home to school and from school to home	Recruit volunteers widely so that *all* families know that their time and talents are welcome Make flexible schedules for volunteers, assemblies, and events to enable employed parents to participate Organize volunteer work; provide training; match time and talent with school, teacher, and student needs; and recognize efforts so that participants are productive	Design and organize a regular schedule of interactive homework (e.g., weekly or bimonthly) that gives *students* responsibility for discussing important things they are learning and helps families stay aware of the content of their children's classwork Coordinate family-linked homework activities, if students have several teachers Involve families with their children in all important curriculum-related decisions	Include parent leaders from all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other groups in the school Offer training to enable leaders to serve as representatives of other families, with input from and return of information to all parents Include students (along with parents) in decision-making groups	Solve turf problems of responsibilities, funds, staff, and locations for collaborative activities Inform families of community programs for students, such as mentoring, tutoring, and business partnerships Ensure equity of opportunities for students and families to participate in community programs or to obtain services Match community contributions with school goals; integrate child and family services with education
Redefinitions					
"Workshop" to mean more than a meeting about a topic held at the school building at a particular time; "workshop" also may mean making information about a topic available in a variety of forms that can be viewed, heard, or read anywhere, anytime	"Communications about school programs and student progress" to mean two-way, three-way, and many-way channels of communication that connect schools, families, students, and the community	"Volunteer" to mean anyone who supports school goals and children's learning or development in any way, at any place, and at any time—not just during the school day and at the school building	"Homework" to mean not only work done alone, but also interactive activities shared with others at home or in the community, linking schoolwork to real life "Help" at home to mean encouraging, listening, reacting, praising, guiding, monitoring, and discussing–not "teaching" school subjects	"Decision making" to mean a process of partnership, of shared views and actions toward shared goals, not a power struggle between conflicting ideas "Parent leader" to mean a real representative, with opportunities and support to hear from and communicate with other families	"Community" to mean not only the neighborhoods where students' homes and schools are located but also neighborhoods that influence student learning and development "Community" rated not only by low or high social or economic qualities, but also by strengths and talents to support students, families, and schools "Community" means all who are interested in and affected by the quality of education, not just families with children in the schools

(Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn, & Van Voorhis, 2002)

Appendix C:

Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement: Expected Results

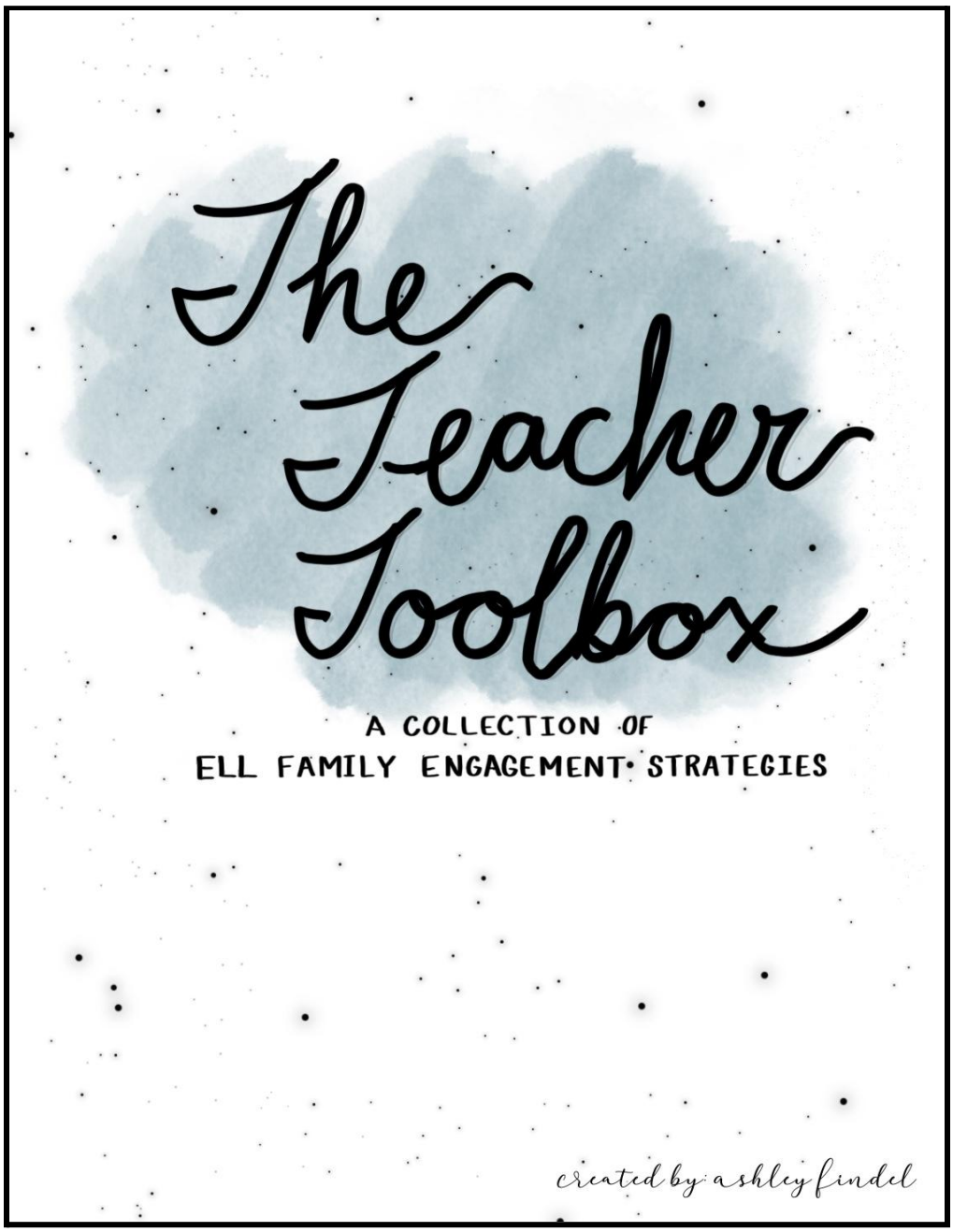
TABLE 1.1.3 Expected Results for Students, Parents, and Teachers of the Six Types of Involvement

Type 1 Parenting	*Type 2 Communicating*	*Type 3 Volunteering*	*Type 4 Learning at Home*	*Type 5 Decision Making*	*Type 6 Collaborating With the Community*
Results for Students					
Awareness of family supervision; respect for parents Positive personal qualities, habits, beliefs, and values, as taught by family Balance between time spent on chores, on other activities, and on homework Good or improved attendance Awareness of importance of school	Awareness of own progress and of actions needed to maintain or improve grades Understanding of school policies on behavior, attendance, and other areas of student conduct Informed decisions about courses and programs Awareness of own role in partnerships, serving as courier and communicator	Skill in communicating with adults Increased learning of skills that receive tutoring or targeted attention from volunteers Awareness of many skills, talents, occupations, and contributions of parents and other volunteers	Gains in skills, abilities, and test scores linked to homework and classwork Homework completion Positive attitude toward schoolwork View of parent as more similar to teacher and home as more similar to school Self-concept of ability as learner	Awareness of representation of families in school decisions Understanding that student rights are protected Specific benefits linked to policies enacted by parent organizations and experienced by students	Increased skills and talents through enriched curricular and extracurricular experiences Awareness of careers and options for future education and work Specific benefits linked to programs, services, resources, and opportunities that connect students with community
Results for Parents					
Understanding of and confidence about parenting, child and adolescent development, and changes in home conditions for learning as children proceed through school Awareness of own and others' challenges in parenting Feeling of support from school and other parents	Understanding school programs and policies Monitoring and awareness of student progress Responding effectively to student problems Interactions with teachers and ease of communications with school and teachers	Understanding teacher's job, increased comfort in school, and carryover of school activities at home Self-confidence about ability to work in school and with children or to take steps to improve own education Awareness that families are welcome and valued at school Gains in specific skills of volunteer work	Know how to support, encourage, and help student at home each year Discussions of school, classwork, and homework Understanding of instructional program each year and of what child is learning in each subject Appreciation of teaching skills Awareness of child as a learner	Input into policies that affect child's education Feeling of ownership of school Awareness of parents' voices in school decisions Shared experiences and connections with other families Awareness of school, district, and state policies	Knowledge and use of local resources by family and child to increase skills and talents or to obtain needed services Interactions with other families in community activities Awareness of school's role in the community and of community's contributions to the school
Results for Teachers					
Understanding families' backgrounds, cultures, concerns, goals, needs, and views of their children Respect for families' strengths and efforts Understanding of student diversity Awareness of own skills to share information on child development	Increased diversity and use of communications with families and awareness of own ability to communicate clearly Appreciation and use of parent network for communications Increased ability to elicit and understand family views on children's programs and progress	Readiness to involve families in new ways, including those who do not volunteer at school Awareness of parent talents and interests in school and children Greater individual attention to students, with help from volunteers	Better design of homework assignments Respect of family time Recognition of equal helpfulness of single parent, dual income, and less formally educated families in motivating and reinforcing student learning Satisfaction with family involvement and support	Awareness of parent perspectives as a factor in policy development and decisions View of equal status of family representatives on committees and in leadership roles	Awareness of community resources to enrich curriculum and instruction Openness to and skill in using mentors, business partners, community volunteers, and others to assist students and augment teaching practice Knowledgeable, helpful referrals of children and families to needed services

(Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn, & Van Voorhis, 2002)

Appendix D:

Teacher Toolbox: Tool for ELL Family Engagement Strategies



The Teacher Toolbox

This tool is created based on findings from a literary study centered around family engagement and provides a collection of strategies inspired by and taken from a literacy study focused on family engagement. These strategies are organized into categories for ease of use. The intended users of this tool are any individuals who work with children and families, specifically in the school and educational setting. This tool is specified for individuals who work with English language learners (ELLs) and their families, but does also contain useful information to use with any and all students and their families.

Table of Contents

Getting to Know Families

Taking the time to get to know families can make a big difference in family and school relationships. Building connections and learning about the skills and values each family holds creates better opportunities to connect and support families and students.

Conducting Home Visits

Home visits are one way of learning about ELL families' funds of knowledge, historically accumulated and culturally developed knowledge and skills for household or individual wellbeing, that supports a better understanding of students and families (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992). This is a time to learn about families strengths and skills that allow educators to develop better home-school connections for students and their families.

- **Suggested Areas to Look at During Home Visits:**
  Do individuals in the family have experiences in these areas? To what extent?
  Information is collected by topics brought up in respectful conversation.

Agriculture and Mining	**Scientific Knowledge**	**Economics**
Ranching & Farming *Management of Animals* *Soil and Irrigation* *Crop Planting* *Hunting* Mining *Timbering* *Equipment Maintenance*	*Construction or Design* *Repair* *House maintenance*	*Renting* *Sales* *Labor laws*
Health Care	**Household**	**Religion**
Holistic medicine *Contemporary medicine* *First aid*	*Childcare* *Cooking* *Budget* *Appliance repair*	*Songs/Hymns* *Religions*

(Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992)

Communication & Meetings

Providing effective and appropriate ways to communicate with ELL families is important in engaging them in students' learning. Being educated on family language skills and availability are two ways to ensure that communication and meetings are effective and encouraging of families.

Communication

There are several ways to provide appropriate language translations for ELL families. It is important to keep in mind each family's literacy and language skills. Not all families are literate in the home language or English so other means of communicating are necessary beyond text (Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn, & Van Voorhis, 2002).

- **Provide <u>appropriate</u> language translations as needed** (Epstein, et al., 2002)
  - Translated documents and text for families who are literate in their home language.
    - Use apps like Talking Points, an application that translates English text into the families' desired language.
  - Voice messages with translated speech for families who are not literate in their home language.
    - Using the text to speech option on translation sites or applications when translation services are unavailable.
    - Recording the text to speech to send to families can be useful for messages home.
  - Using a translation service via phone or video call.
    - Translation hotlines can be provided by school districts or personally used with a small fee per minute.

- **Encourage families to pick-up report cards and conferences** (Epstein, et al., 2002)
  - Provides means for open communication and time for families to ask questions.
    - Secure translation services if needed to attend as well.
  - Invites and welcomes families to the school.

- **Send schedules, memos, newsletters, and notices regularly** (Epstein, et al., 2002)
  - Use a delivery method that is appropriate for **every** family.
  - Let's families know what is happening in the classroom and inform them of important information.
- **Provide clear information about school policy and information** (Epstein, et al., 2002)
  - Keeping in mind different families' literacies and languages, this information may need to be presented to families written in another language or verbally in the home language.

- **Openly communicate goals for students with families** (Epstein, et al., 2002)
  - Holding conferences with parents about student language and academic goals and progress.
  - Invite and encourage and seek out family input and participation in developing and meeting these goals.

Meetings

Every family's schedule is different. Some English language learner families may hold labor intensive work schedules or may have conflicts with transportation limiting their availability for planned meetings and conferences (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008).

- **Provide several different meeting times** (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008)
  - Offer meetings or conference times early in the morning, in the afternoon, evening, and at night with flexible times.
    - Work schedules or child care may be a conflict.

- **Consider families' transportation** (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008)
  - Consider families' means of transportation to attend these meetings and conflicts they may arise or limit their availability.
    - *Are families carpooling?*
    - *Do families share vehicles that are only available at certain times?*
    - *Do families plan around public transportation times?*
    - *Do families walk?*

- **Offer alternate methods of conferencing**
  - Phone call conferencing, video call conferencing, or home visits

Homework Support

Providing ELL families with opportunities to support their children's learning at home can encourage family engagement in student learning in and out of school and can also provide families with opportunities to show their expertise, strengths, skills, and interest in student learning.

Homework Monitoring

Providing support to families on ways to monitor their child's work at home is one way to engage families in student's learning, show interest and appreciation for school from parents, and build the connection between school and home.

- **Encourage families to discuss homework and projects with students. Providing families with information about upcoming assignments to have open up discussions about what students are learning and bring to conversation to the home** (Epstein, et al., 2002).

- **Support parents in developing a homework routine with their children. Make homework part of the child's schedule** (Colorin Colorado, 2015)**.**

- **Encourage parents to check that homework is completed, when possibl**e (Colorin Colorado, 2015). Families with conflicting schedules and limited English can do quick checks to see the work is complete.
  - Using a recording system (agenda books) can be a tool for parents to check completion of the work.
  - Some suggestions for busy families are:
    - For students to leave their work on the table for someone to check when they get home
    - Students with devices can send a photo of the work to the family member.

Family Inclusive Assignments

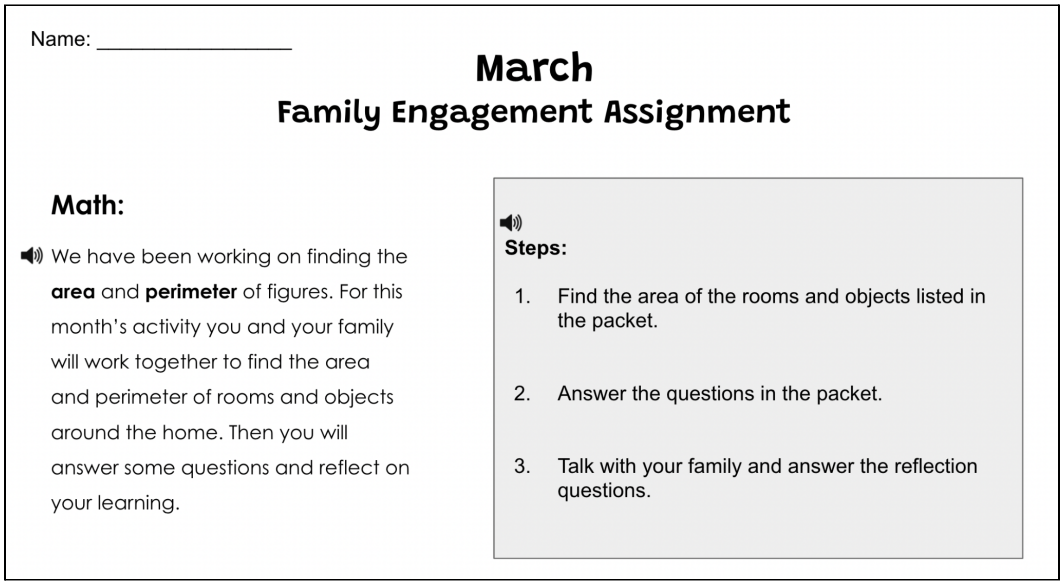
Educators can plan at home assignments that encourage family engagement by using what they know about families strengths, values, cultures, and interests (Epstein, et al., 2002). Designing and planning homeworks and projects that are more inclusive of parents and emphasize their expertise in different areas gives parents more comfort and encouragement to engage in the child's learning.

- **Plan and design assignments with less English language support needed.**
- **Plan assignments and projects that make deeper connections between the academic content and the real world where most parents havegreat strengths and skills.**

- **Encourage families and students to use their home language together if desired during homework to support learning and communication** (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

- **Plan assignments that can include families**
  - Interviews, timelines, biographies

- **Assigning weekly or monthly Family Engagement Assignments that encourage families to learn together** (Epstein, et al., 2002).
  - Given at the beginning of the week or month and have a due date that is at the end of the week or month to provide time and flexibility in the assignments.
  - Should also be planned to encourage families to share their knowledge as well as getting students to think and share their knowledge.
  - Can contain reflections about the activity, something they learned from their family, and content area questions based on the activity.
    - **Example**: Family Engagement Assignment idea



Name: _____

March

Family Engagement Assignment

Math:

We have been working on finding the **area** and **perimeter** of figures. For this month's activity you and your family will work together to find the area and perimeter of rooms and objects around the home. Then you will answer some questions and reflect on your learning.

Steps:

1. Find the area of the rooms and objects listed in the packet.
2. Answer the questions in the packet.
3. Talk with your family and answer the reflection questions.

- **Plan homework and project assignments that connect family strengths and values with academic content to allow and engage families to engage and support students and share their knowledge.**

- ➢ Examples based on common academic topics in each content area that link to areas which can be discussed during home visits and other means of learning about families and the knowledge they hold (Moll, et al., 1992).

Content Area:	Topic:	Possible Family Strengths:
MATH	Area & Perimeter Multiplication, Division, Geometry	Farming, Gardening, Construction, Cooking
PHYSICAL SCIENCE	Pulleys & Levers, Batteries, Measurement, Chemistry	Appliance Repair, Machine Maintenance, Vehicle Repair, Construction, Cooking
LIFE SCIENCE	Life Cycle, Pollination, Biology, Health	Farming, Animals Management, Gardening, Medicine,
SOCIAL SCIENCES	History, Geography, Economics	Budgeting, Rent, Child Care, Travel, Religion
READING & WRITING	Poetry, Nonfiction, Fiction, Letter Writing	Religion, Songs, Storytelling, Recipes,

Environment

Supporting families to provide environments that allow students to learn and grow and that will engage parents in their child's learning process.

- ❖ **Supporting families in designating space for students to work at home productively**
  - ➢ Quiet spaces away from conversations, tv, or other distractions
  - ➢ Materials needed for working effectively (pens, pencils, calculators, etc.)

- ❖ **Encouraging families to provide students encouragement in their work**
  - ➢ Checking completion
  - ➢ Create a plan for completing work as a family
  - ➢ Encourage parents to stay positive with helping their child
    - ■ Provide websites, tools, and resources parents can suggest or offer to their children when they are not sure of something.
      - Dictionary websites
      - Library homework help (in person or online)

School Community

Connecting ELL families to the school community can be one way to get families engaged in their children's learning. It is not uncommon that some families have different views of the roles in education (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). Some ELL families also may be unfamiliar with formal schooling (Panferov, 2008). Providing families with support in navigating the school system can help families feel like a valuable part of the school community.

Including Families

By including families into the school community families feel valued and welcomed and have more opportunities to engage in their child's learning.

- **Encouraging families to participate in parent organizations that give them the opportunity to be a leader in student learning decision making** (Epstein, et al., 2002).
  - Organizations such as the PTA.

- **Provide families with means to acquire proper information in their preferred language to vote for school representatives** (Epstein, et al., 2002).
  - Providing videos or documents in preferred language that will inform and educate families about school policies, budgets, and representatives.

- **Connect families with translating services provided through the school.**

- **Connect families with others who speak the same home languages.**

- **Seek out parent expertise on their children and openly discuss home and school comparisons in behavior, academics, and language use** (Pushor, 2012).

Navigating Schools

Providing support for families that may be unfamiliar with formal school or even those just new to the area and school can help families feel more comfortable and welcomed into the school community and engage in their child's learning.

- **Connect families with partner families who speak the same home language who are**

familiar with the school and community that can help the family navigate the school and build connections.

- **Set up times for families to visit the school and become familiar with the environment while providing any language support needed** (Albrecht, 2021; Chavkin & Williams Jr., 1989).
  - **Set up meet and greets with staff the student will engage with.**
    - **Teachers, Specialist, Principals, Counselors**
  - **Tour the school and become familiar with the building and area around the school.**
  - **Give families the time and opportunity to ask questions with appropriate language supports**

Community Resources

Connecting families and students to the community outside of school and providing support for families in integrating in their new community gives a feeling of belonging. When families, schools, and communities work together it provides more opportunities for learners (Epstein, et al., 2002).

Family Education Support

Connecting families with services that further their education and provide more support beyond the school and classroom can give families opportunities to engage in their children's learning through developing their learning as well and feeling like valuable members of the outside community.

- **Providing families with access to educational support programs to further education and training** (Epstein, et al., 2002)
  - GED information
  - College credits
    - Local community colleges or online institutions
  - Vocational and career schooling
    - BOCES
  - Family literacy courses
  - Mentoring programs
  - Tutoring programs

Daily Life

Providing families with several resources that will assist and support them in their daily life can help them feel like valuable members of the community and build the relationship between school, home, and the community. Showing families their needs are important to us shows them they are cared about as people beyond being students.

- **Connect families with individuals who can support them with nutrition and various health services** (Epstein, et al., 2002).
  - Food pantries
  - Doctors with staff who speak the families native language
    - Family Medicine, Eye Care, Dentists, Orthodontists, Specialists

Teacher Created Resources for Parents

A useful resource that can be created by schools, teachers, or teacher teams could be a collection of useful, local services that can be found around the district and close by. This resource that can be researched and created can provide families with information they may not ask about and might not realize are available.

- **Make the resource digital and paper to reach all families.**

- **This teacher created resource could contain local services such as:**
  - Public transportation
    - Bus stations and schedules
    - Taxi service numbers and locations
  - Multilingual doctors and dentists
  - Pharmacys
  - Shelters
  - Food pantries
  - Public libraries

- **The resource could also include useful contact information such as:**
  - School phone number
  - Teacher emails
  - Translation hotlines
  - Counseling services or counselors contact information
  - Social worker's contact information

- **These resources should be available in the families' home language or in an audio copy for families to listen to in their home language.**

Reflection & Notes

Date	Class	Strategy	Results & Notes
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			

Date	Class	Strategy	Results & Notes
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			

Date	Class	Strategy	Results & Notes
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			
/ /			

References

Albrecht, D. (2021). The journey from traditional parent involvement to an alliance for empowerment: A paradigm shift. *Theory Into Practice*, 60(1), 7-17. doi: 10.1080/00405841.2020.1827897

Arias, M.B., & Morillo-Campbell, M. (2008). Promoting ELL parental involvement: Challenges in contested times. *Education Public Interest Center.* Arizona State University

Chavkin, N.F., & Williams Jr., D.L. (1989). Low income parents' attitudes toward parent involvement in education. *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare,* 16(3), 17-28.

Colorín Colorado. (2015, December 1). *Homework Tips for Parents of ELLs*. Colorín Colorado. https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/homework-tips-parents-ells

Epstein, J., Sanders, M.G., Simon, B.S., Salinas, K.C., Jansorn, N.R. & Van Voorhis, F.L. (2002). *School, family, and community partnership: Your handbook for action.* Sage Publication.

Moll, L.C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & González, N., (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect classrooms. *Theory Into Practice,* 31(2), 132-141.

Panferov, S. (2010). Increasing ELL parental involvement in our schools: Learning from the parents. *Theory Into Practice,* (49),106-112. Doi: 10.1090/00405841003626551

Pushor, D. (2012). Tracing my research on parent engagement: Working to interrupt the story of school as a protectorate. *Action in Teacher Education,* 34, 464-479.

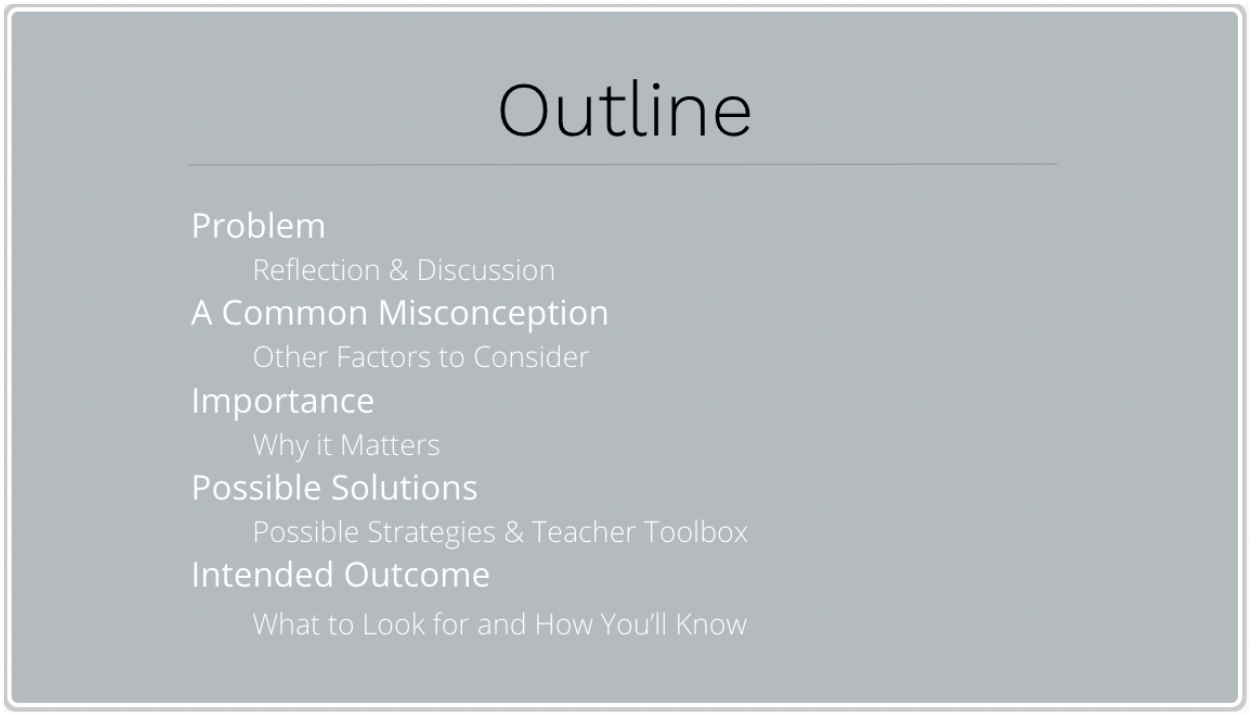
U.S. Department of Education. (2018, October 25). *How to Help with Homework: Monitor Assignments*. Colorín Colorado. https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/how-help-homework-monitor-assignments

Appendix E

Discussion Questions

Appendix F:

Product (Webinar/PD) Presentation Slides



The Problem

Reflect or Discuss

How do you encourage and engage English language learner families in student's learning?

What challenges have you seen or faced in your own experiences regarding family engagement with English language learner families?

Debunking a Common Misconception

Minority and immigrant families are not involved in children's schooling because they do not value education (Chávez-Reyes, 2010).

Factors to Consider

- Language Barriers
- Previous Educational Experiences
- Cultural Beliefs and Personal Life
- Other's Perceptions

Language Barriers

- Many parents report that language barriers often hold them back from engaging in children's learning areas such as homework, teacher communication, and provided information are challenges (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008).
- Embarrassment or intimidation when approached by their child with homework questions due to language barriers (Wassell, Hawrylak, & Scantlebury, 2015)
- Uncertainty on how to communicate and be feel welcomed into the school community (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008).

Previous Educational Experiences

- Some families may have different educational experiences than their child (Panferov, 2010).
  - Education in a different state
  - Interrupted schooling
  - Little or no formal schooling'
- United States educational system can be different and overwhelming for families unfamiliar with it (Panferov, 2010).
- Families may be embarrassed to open up about their educational experiences (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008).

Cultural and Personal

- Some families hold different cultural values around educational roles (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008).
  - Parents → instill values, behavior, and nurture
  - Educators → teach academics
- Families may believe that it is not their place to get involved in classroom or school business and sometimes may not be quick to offer instructional support at home (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008).
- Families often work labor intensive jobs with busy schedules making it hard to attend meetings, conferences, and event (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008).
- Families may also have conflicts regarding transportation (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008).

Perception

- It is not uncommon that ELL families are viewed as being unable to provide for their children and that they lack resources for educating their children.
- Teacher's perceptions of ELLs and their actions or lack thereof can also create barriers or leave barriers for ELL families (Wassell, Hawrylak, & Scantlebury, 2015).
  - Narrow views of engagement by comparing good parents and bad parents based on engagement levels and levels of support at home.

Importance

- Making families feel welcomed and valued in the classroom, school, and community.
- Helps build relationships and rapport with students and families.
- Increase support at home for students
- Increased confidence in students and families
- Open communication

Possible Solutions

The Teacher Toolbox for Download

Provides a collection of possible solutions or strategies to empower English language learner family engagement.

Intended Outcomes

- Increase in teachers, administration, and specialists taking action to empower ELL families to engage in student learning.
- Increase in family participation and engagement in the school community and student learning among ELL families.
- More respectful relationships among schools, families, learners, and communities with increased understanding of each other.
- Further development of ideas, strategies, and a increase in educators sharing their successes and continued challenges related to ELL family engagement.

References

Arias, M.B., & Morillo-Campbell, M. (2008). Promoting ELL parental involvement: Challenges in contested times. *Education Public Interest Center.* Arizona State University

Chávez-Reyes, C. (2010). Inclusive approach to parent engagement for young English language learners and their families. *National Society for the Study of Education, 109*(2), 574-504.

Panferov, S. (2010). Increasing ELL parental involvement in our schools: Learning from the parents. *Theory Into Practice,* (49), 106-112. Doi: 10.1090/00405841003626551

Wassell, B.A., Hawrylak, M.F., & Scantlebury, K. (2017). Arrears, resources, frustrations, and empathy: Teachers' expectations for families involvement for latino/a ELL students in urban STEM classrooms. *Urban Education*, *52*(10), 1233-1254.

Appendix G:

Product (Webinar) External Site Link (Youtube)

https://youtu.be/Aue6D6qQZpY