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The Evaluation of Family-School Collaboration
with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families

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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

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Abstract

Research has demonstrated that when parents are involved in their children's academic and school life, children experience improved language achievement, overall behavior, grades, test scores, have improved attendance, and a lower chance of dropping out of school (Friend and Cook, 2007). Despite the growing diversity of U.S. schools, there is still a systemic lack of effort to include parents of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This research study sought to examine barriers to establishing a successful collaborative relationship with these families from the perspective of elementary, middle, and high school teachers using an online survey. A total of 39 teachers from various grade levels responded to the survey. Responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics and a Cut and Sort method for open-ended questions. Responses indicated that currently, teachers in a large Northern Virginia school system perceive language differences and time constraints as the biggest barriers to establishing effective communication with culturally diverse families. Additionally, they feel like the parent's lack of knowledge of the U.S. educational system impedes this relationship as well. While there are many supports currently available in the school system, results indicated that they are not being frequently used. Teachers suggested what supports they would find helpful (e.g. more translation services, compensated home visits, alternative meeting spots, family literacy programs) for upcoming school years. Overall, teachers felt that this is an issue that should be more of a priority in the school system. Implications of this study and recommendations for future research are included.

Introduction

Schools around the country are rapidly growing more racially, linguistically, and culturally diverse. According to the U.S. Department of Education, from fall 2001 through fall 2011, the number of White/Caucasian students enrolled in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade in U.S. public schools has decreased from 28.7 million to 25.6 million while the number of Hispanic students enrolled during this period increased from 8.2 million students to 11.8 million. Their share of public school enrollment increased from 17 to 24 percent. This is just an example of one ethnic/racial group that is quickly growing in the United States. Public schools are overall becoming more diverse, which means that the number of children from culturally and linguistically diverse families enrolled in special education is also increasing. The focus on parent participation in educational decisions regarding their children with disabilities was first established in 1975 by the Education of All Handicapped Children's Act (EHA); however, in spite of these legislative mandates for direct involvement of parents, the level of collaboration between educators and culturally diverse families of children diagnosed with disabilities is minimal (Olivos, Gallagher & Aguilar, 2010). The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) also has specific requirements for family involvement that require the notification and participation of parents in their children's education. It is also important to recognize that the idea of parental involvement is a standard that is somewhat unique to the United States, which may add to the difficulties experienced when trying to connect with families of different cultures.

Friend and Cook (2007) define collaboration as “a style for direct interaction between at least two co-equal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as

they work toward a common goal.” Studies have shown that when this level of collaboration exists between parents and schools, the students tend to perform better (e.g. improved language achievement, overall behavior, grades, test scores), their attendance increases, and dropout rates are lower. Both parents and school staff have reported barriers that interfere with the successful collaboration between families and schools. Teachers consistently report that they lack an understanding of the language spoken in a child’s home and the formal training to deal with culturally and linguistically diverse parents. Teachers have also expressed a distrust of different cultures and lifestyles and admit to endorsing negative stereotypes (e.g. parental apathy) (Basterra, 1998). On the other hand, parents of culturally diverse backgrounds report the following barriers: work interference, lack of confidence in interacting in a culture different from their own, lack of English language skills, lack of knowledge of U.S school systems, and different expectations of the school role (Vera et. al, 2012).

There are many ways that a parent can be involved in a child’s education such as helping with homework, participating in school events, and interacting with school staff. Unfortunately, there is still a lack of systematic efforts to include parents from culturally diverse backgrounds effectively. Too often, schools expect families to get involved on their own or rely on ineffective and impersonal measures such as sending fliers home to establish a connection. While sometimes the use of impersonal approaches is necessary, if schools do not make the extra effort to make more personal contact with parents, they are not going to improve the crucial relationship that needs to be established with families. This thesis explores the literature surrounding collaboration with diverse families, in addition to investigating the results of a survey administered to teachers (K-

12) currently working in a large Northern Virginia school system that looks at their perceived barriers to fostering this relationship, what supports they are currently using, and what they feel could be done to address this collaboration in the future.

Review of Literature

Barriers and Challenges

Vera et. al (2012) examined the relationships that exist among a variety of specific barriers and facilitators of immigrant parents of English Learners involvement in the schools. Participants included 239 parents of EL children from four elementary school districts. Overall, the sample represented 28 different cultural backgrounds. Each parent was then sent a survey that was translated into the primary language of the parents and had English translations on the back so that they could choose the language in which they would respond.

The researchers found that the most common types of parent involvement were monitoring children's homework activities and talking with their children about their experiences at school. The least common type of parental involvement was utilizing community resources such as going to the library with children. As for barriers to involvement with the school, parents mostly reported language barriers, lack of knowledge about the U.S. educational system, not wanting to interfere with how teachers do their jobs, and stress from other responsibilities. In terms of how these perceived barriers to participation related to types of parental involvement, the researchers found that parents who felt more uncomfortable with their English language skills were *less likely* to utilize community resources, provide routines for their children in the home, read with their children, and talk with their children about their school experiences.

This study further shows why it is important to tailor interventions aimed at increasing parental involvement based on factors such as educational background and linguistic fluency, instead of taking a more general approach for parents of EL children. Since school climate was reported to be a significant predictor of parental involvement, schools should make efforts to convey positive messages about the importance of parental involvement as it relates to a child's educational success. Many perspectives of parents were not included in this sample. Also, one might assume that the parents who are already more involved in their child's education were the ones who responded to the survey. Therefore, parents who are much less involved in their child's education were not well represented in this sample. In addition, the participants were from relatively well-resourced communities, which may have impacted responses.

A review conducted by Olivos, Gallagher, & Aguilar (2010) examined the challenges that exist to family-school collaboration and how special educators can better foster a collaborative climate with culturally and linguistically diverse families of children with moderate to severe disabilities. Conditions for collaboration required that the educators understand how they can accept a culturally and linguistically diverse community's culture, power, and knowledge in the school context and how *they* can align their own values/beliefs, while still adhering to school policies and practices. The researchers drew their information from three areas that are not typically integrated: 1) families of culturally and linguistically diverse children in general education, 2) families of children with disabilities regardless of their culture, and 3) families of culturally and linguistically diverse children with disabilities.

In terms of support for collaboration, the researchers stated that informal supports are essential for successful education experiences for families of children with disabilities. The family needs to be considered in a holistic fashion; that is, as a unit that is characterized by different levels of complex social support. As for challenges to collaboration, the researchers explain that schools have historically defined “legitimate” forms of parental participation based on the values of the school system. This frequently leads families who express ideas and values that are contrary to what the dominant school’s culture perceives as critical. This brings up the issue of power asymmetries between dominant groups and culturally and linguistically diverse groups, which can lead these families to feeling even more isolated. Differences in race, culture, and/or disability are also seen as a barrier. For example, parents may have differing beliefs about childrearing, a lack of understanding of parental rights, and inadequate information about the services for which their child qualifies. Further, the researchers express that educators often lack the cultural awareness they need to understand the perspective of parents, which may result in miscommunications and misunderstandings. Broussard (2003) stated that the homogeneity of the teaching staff is a major setback in collaborative partnerships with families. Although statistics are pointing to the growing student diversity of US schools, the teaching force is still relatively homogenous with the majority of teachers represented by females coming from European-American, suburban, and middle-class backgrounds. Due to this homogeneity, many teachers and administrator’s attitudes about parent or family engagement are seen through the perspective of European-American middle-class values, experiences, and assumptions.

Benefits of Involvement

There is ample existing research that suggests that parental involvement in schools results in a variety of academic benefits for a child. Ma, Shen, & Krenn (2013) used national data from the 2007-2008 School and Staffing Survey (SASS) in order to examine the relationships between parental involvement and school outcomes related to adequate yearly progress in urban, suburban, and rural schools. The adequate yearly progress is based on standardized assessments and is a very unique accountability measure at the school level. Schools strive to meet adequate yearly progress. This analysis stratified the 2007-2008 SASS national sample of public schools into three categories of urban, suburban, and rural schools. The final sample resulted in 1650 urban schools, 3138 suburban schools, and 2550 rural schools. Researchers examined both outcome (school's status in making adequate yearly progress and whether or not the schools were identified for improvement) and predictor variables of each school's status in making adequate yearly progress (with adjustment over control variables). The data were analyzed using a multiple regression analysis.

The researchers found that participation from parents demonstrated statistically significant positive relationships with schools making adequate yearly progress and not being classified as schools in need of mandatory improvement across urban, suburban, and rural schools. This was the only predictor variable that was *robustly important* to both outcome variables across all three of the school settings. The relationship was stronger, however, for urban schools across both outcome variables. School support for parental involvement demonstrated statistically significant *negative* relationships with schools making adequate yearly progress and staying off the list of schools in need of

mandatory improvement in urban and suburban school settings. The researchers suggest that one explanation for this could be that schools with a structured support system for parental involvement actually ended up hindering the effectiveness of parental involvement. There was no relationship with rural schools. Frequency of updates of school websites was statistically significant (and positive) across both outcome variables for urban schools *only*. Finally, provision of translated materials to parents with limited English proficiency (LEP) was statistically significant, and positive, only making adequate yearly progress with urban schools only. Overall, urban schools reported not only a wider range of importance of parental involvement, but also stronger importance of parental involvement. Urban schools tend to have lower school performance, which led the researchers to believe that this low school performance would be a condition that affected some of the reported results, and that the importance of parental involvement may have an “upper limit.” In other words, parental involvement may cease to be important once a school performance rises to a certain level.

Strategies for Improvement

In her overview of existing literature regarding the effects of family involvement and home to school partnerships to academic achievement, Yune (2014) proposes some strategies for improving the relationship that schools have with culturally diverse families. First, she believes that an effective change would involve moving from a “subtractive model” to an “assets-based approach,” meaning she believes that teachers should approach education by highlighting the diverse experiences that culturally and linguistically diverse students bring to the classroom in order to help them better transition between the two different worlds of home and school. Teachers who act as

researchers, Yune states, can effectively develop meaningful learning experiences based on the knowledge they have of their students' and their families' culture. For example, Okagaki and Frensch's (1998) study suggested that Latino parents placed a higher importance on developing autonomy and conformity; European-American parents had more confidence about their ability to help their children succeed academically; and Asian-American parents had higher expectations for their children's educational attainment when compared to other parents. In terms of effective communication strategies, Yune suggests that designating a school facilitator who works in partnership with classrooms, grade-levels, special areas, etc. helps to create a consistent person for parents to direct inquiries and/or to communicate their concerns to. Due to this consistency, the facilitator can build trust with the families over time. Professional development for educators is another tool that Yune believes could potentially improve the relationship between parents and the school. Teachers could be receiving in-service trainings that use techniques such as role-play, case scenarios, reflective learning strategies, and self-reflection to help them become more knowledgeable of ways to meet the needs of their diverse students and their families.

Home Visits

In a five-year follow-up study, Meyer, Mann, & Becker (2011) investigated whether home visits impacted variables often associated with academic success (i.e. school attendance, academic performance, and parental engagement). Participants included 29 kindergarten through second grade teachers in a rural school district who conducted home visits at the beginning of the school year. Revised surveys were administered to the teachers. The researchers found that the results were consistent with

previous findings in that teachers reported the following positive effects: improved relationships and communication with parents (e.g. positive conversations instead of conversations focusing solely on student problems), more appreciation of the influence of the child's home environment related to school performance (e.g. schedules, routines, cultural beliefs, etc.), and a better understanding of the child's behavior in school. In addition to these findings, teachers identified a connection between the home visits and variables related to school success. The researchers concluded that home visits create a less-threatening opportunity to build rapport with parents and provide an opportunity to engage in more positive conversations as opposed to having dialogues centered on specific concerns with a child. These positive conversations, in turn, help to establish mutual trust.

Programs

There are some programs and resources that schools can be using to address this concern. For example, the Family Involvement Network of Educators is a national network from Harvard Graduate School of Education that brings together thousands of stakeholders including: K-12 teachers, researchers of higher education, community based professionals, parent leaders, and policy advocates who are devoted to promoting strong partnerships between schools, families, and communities. Members of this organization receive the latest research information on parental involvement, strategies and tools that explain best practices when strengthening family partnerships, and opportunities for exchanging ideas with other professionals. Utilizing these organizations provides teachers with a plethora of resources to continue to improve their own practices when it comes to connecting with families in a meaningful way. The California Board of Psychology

(2004) has developed an outline of content for a module on human diversity that could help guide continuing education for teachers and other school personnel. The intent of this model is to provide the foundation school professionals may need when it comes to working with diverse populations. The module includes six major units: 1) Toward and Informed, Functional Understanding of the Impact of Diversity on Human Behavior and a Respect for Differences—in the Context of Professional Practice; 2) Ethical and Legal Considerations; 3) Enhancing General Competence Related to Diversity Considerations; 4) Implications of Diversity for Assessing and Diagnosing Psychosocial Problems and Psychopathology; 5) Implications of Diversity for Intervention; and 6) Implications for Supervision/Mentoring . This is a highly acclaimed model that has been used effectively in many programs across the nation (Chavkin, 2005).

Teaching Training

Another initiative is being taken by the American Association of Colleges for Teach Education (AACTE). Recently, they have developed a program focused on infusing parental engagement education in teacher education programs. Five national sites were selected through a competitive grant process to become partners. All of these partners are developing and evaluating new approaches to preparing teachers to engage families from diverse communities. Some of the projects so far have included: using students as community researchers; developing on-line training; conducting parental engagement conferences; infusing parental involvement activities into the curriculum; and using families as faculty. The families as faculty initiative has produced convincing results with both pre-service students and the Family Faculty gaining a new understanding of how diverse families and schools can work together effectively.

Current Practices in School of Investigation

The system in which the survey was administered is one of the more diverse school systems in the country. Students in the system come from more than 80 different countries, speak more than 60 languages, and represent a variety of ethnic and cultural groups. According to the system's website, the student demographics as of 2014 were as follows: 30.94% Black/African American, 34.95% Hispanic, 26.74% White/Caucasian, 4.32% Asian, 0.48% Native American, 0.25% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 2.32% Multi-racial. The community is also a very economically diverse system.

The investigated school district has progressively provided more supports and services to students, teachers, and parents in order to address this diversity and establish more collaborative relationships between the schools and the homes. In an interview with a school's English Language Learner (ELL) specialist, it was noted that some of the current practices the system uses includes the use of interpreters and translators, parent liaisons, documents sent home in different languages (English, Spanish, Amharic, Arabic), and foster the relationship with culturally diverse families. Some of these responsibilities include: coordinating translation services for parent-teacher conferences, providing information to parents about resources available outside of the school, offering support groups for parents, coordinating parent education events, and informing parents about home learning activities. Most of these liaisons are school-based. In addition, the school system has a Family and Community Engagement (FACE) Center housed at central office. This center integrates relevant afterschool activities for students with workshops and resources for parents and community members aimed at improving students' academic achievement. The FACE center provides parents with information

regarding their child's education, how to help their child with homework, how to prepare for parent-teacher conferences, how to better understand school policies, report cards, assessment tests, etc., and how to obtain referrals to other community resources.

Research Questions

While there has been research that have examined factors that both facilitate and limit the educational involvement of culturally and linguistically diverse families, fewer studies have examined the perception of these barriers from the perspective of teachers. The following research questions guided the current investigation: 1) What barriers exist, from the perspective of school teachers, that hinder their ability to foster collaborative relationships with culturally diverse families? 2) How often are offered supports being utilized? 3) What kinds of practices or programs are currently being used that help to facilitate communication between culturally diverse families and the school? and 4) What can be done in the future to address this concern?

Method

Participants

Participants were teachers selected from the investigated school system, which consists of 12 elementary schools, one pre K-8 school, two middle schools, and one high school that has two campuses. However, only three schools were used in this study due to constraints from the systems's research board. The schools consisted of one elementary, one middle school, and one high school. Participants included teachers from grade levels kindergarten through twelfth grade (N=39). Contact information was obtained for as many teachers as possible on the city's school website. Demographic information for the participants in summarized in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1
Demographics of Entire Study Sample

	Number	Percent
Male	5	12.8%
Female	34	87.2%

	Number	Percent
Caucasian or White	31	79.5%
Hispanic or Latino	1	2.6%
Black or African American	5	12.8%
Native American or American Indian	0	0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0	0%
Other	2	5.1%

	Number	Percent
Elementary (K-5)	5	12.8%
Middle (6-8)	22	56.4%
High (9-12)	12	30.8%

Table 2
Language Proficiency

	Number	Percent
English Only	28	71.8%
English + Other(s)	11	28.2%

Procedure

Teachers completed a survey that was administered via E-mail. The survey was sent once school had been in session for several months (March, 2016) in order to give teachers a chance to get to know their students and their families. The survey was sent out once, followed by a reminder email if no response had been received after two weeks. Responses were recorded using the Qualtrics software for further analysis.

Measure

The survey was developed by the researcher using the Qualtrics software. The survey consisted of a total of 18 questions including demographic questions, questions regarding perceived barriers, current practices, and questions about future practices. The survey questions were presented in various styles including multiple choice, Likert-scale, and open-ended. The information for the survey questions was determined by research presented in the literature review as well as interviews with various staff members in the system. Additionally, interviews were conducted with employees of other diverse school systems in Virginia who have been very progressive in their efforts to facilitate effective communication and involvement with culturally diverse families.

Analysis

Data obtained through the surveys was analyzed using a grounded theory method in order to construct more specific theories related to this topic through the analysis process. Descriptive statistics were obtained for all multiple-choice and Likert-scale questions while the Cut and Sort method (Ryan & Bernard, 2003) was used for identifying themes among the open-ended questions about current barriers and recommendations for the future.

Results

Research Question 1

Descriptive statistics were obtained to examine what teachers perceive to be the most common barriers to successful collaboration with culturally diverse families. Teachers were allowed to pick multiple answers on this item. A cut and sort method was used to evaluate common themes seen among the open-ended responses to this question.

Some examples of barriers reported by teachers in the open-ended question include: parents not feeling like they are a valued part of the school system, differences in how and when to show respect, the school's refusal to translate materials in various native languages, respect for education in general, and inconsistent parental contact information. Overall, the most common barriers reported were differences in language and teacher's time constraints. Additionally, when asked about how often teachers are seeing culturally diverse parents attend important student related meetings, 38% of teachers reported that they *rarely* see these parents attend special education meetings, and 92% reported that they *sometimes* see these parents attend various general education meetings.

Table 3
Teacher's Perceptions of Barriers to Collaboration

	Number	Percent
Language Barriers	33	85%
Time constraints	23	59%
Differences in beliefs about education	16	41%
Lack of cultural awareness needed to understand the perspective of culturally diverse families	9	23%
Lack of resources to help foster this communication	9	23%
Differences in socioeconomic status	7	18%
Other	6	15%
Differences in race	2	5%

Research Question 2

Descriptive statistics were obtained to determine how often available support systems in the schools are currently being used by the teachers. Based on the data, the majority of the offered supports were being used less than once a month or not at all.

Additionally, some teachers were not aware what a “parent liaison” is or whether or not their school had one. However, when asked about ways in which they *have* utilized the parent liaison, most teachers responded by saying they have accessed that support to help facilitate communication with a student’s parent, and to help coordinate translation services for parent-teacher conferences. When asked how satisfied they were with currently offered supports, 31% of teachers responded to the “Neutral” option. Table 4 details teacher’s responses when asked to indicate how often they used various supports that are currently offered in the system.

Table 4: Frequency of Use

#	Question	Never	Less than Once a Month	Once a Month	2-3 Times a Month	Once a Week	2-3 Times a Week	Daily	Total Responses	Mean
1	Parent Liaisons	11	16	5	5	2	0	0	39	2.26
2	Interpreters and translators	8	18	3	6	3	0	1	39	2.54
3	Home visits	34	4	1	0	0	0	0	39	1.15
4	Notes in native language	14	17	2	1	3	1	0	38	2.08
5	Professional development opportunities	12	20	2	3	1	0	1	39	2.10
6	Provide groups/meetings specifically for diverse families	26	9	3	1	0	0	0	39	1.46
7	Call/meet with the parent before major meetings	8	17	10	2	2	0	0	39	2.31
8	Face and Community Engagement Center	30	7	1	0	0	0	0	38	1.24

Research Question 3

A cut and sort method was used to evaluate common themes identified among the open-ended responses regarding what other practices the teachers currently use and find to be effective. Some of the other strategies reported by the teachers included: use of the

Language Line (a phone translation service), referrals to a bilingual counselor, and designating a “point-person” to synthesize information from all teachers regarding a student in an attempt to have less people contacting a parent about a student’s school performance, as this can be overwhelming for a parent. Examples of teacher responses are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Other Supports Used

Teacher	Response
1	“Language Line”
2	“I use the Language Line that provides translators to make phone calls.”
3	“Phone calls home to update parents about student performance.”
4	“Refer student to the bilingual school counselor.”
5	Most of my parent outreach has been through the phone, in-school conferences, and notes home. I have no idea what a "parent liaison" is and I'm wondering if we even have such a thing or if it perhaps has a different name at my school... We specifically try not to overwhelm parents with too much contact, so much of the conversations are synthesized between teachers before contacting the parent. Then, the teacher-Advisor, Counselor, Dean, or Social Worker can deliver a summary of concerns or important issues from all 7 teachers, rather than the parent being bombarded with 7 teacher phone calls. This also allows teachers to collaborate more effectively about students' needs.”
6	“Community connections.”
7	“Phone calls and text messages”
8	“Language line—I have never used it but I do know that it is an option.”

Research Question 4

The final search question explored what teachers in the explored system think would be helpful strategies to implement in the future to address this concern. Open-ended responses were analyzed for themes and trends using a cut and sort method. A prominent theme in teacher responses was that they feel as if more of the collaborative relationship effort should be put on the families rather than the teachers. Teachers report that as of now, they are observing the teaching staff doing a majority of the work in terms of maintaining relationships with culturally diverse families, indicating that it is hard for them to do their job if the parents are not showing that they respect and appreciate education in the first place. Multiple teachers voiced the desire to have more translation services available. For example, teachers feel that the two main portals for parental academic information should be accessible online in native languages, email translation services should be available, and that more documents should be sent home in native languages. Offering more family programs was another commonly reported idea. Teachers reported that they think it would be beneficial if the system offered family literacy programs and adult English language classes. In terms of home visits, some teachers reported that they would not feel safe doing this, while others reported that they think that teachers should be encouraged and compensated for home visits as they feel it would “change everything” about the classroom experience for students and teachers. Additionally, teachers were asked about how competent they feel when working with culturally diverse parents and whether or not they think this is an area that deserves more attention. Most teachers took a neutral stance on their level of competency (36%); however, 72% percent of the sample responded with either “strongly agree” or “agree”

when asked if they think that improving this communication should be more of a priority. This indicates that teachers still feel there is room for improvement in this area and that it deserves more attention. Teacher perceptions of their competency and their opinions regarding the importance of this concern are documented in Table 6 and Table 7.

Table 6: Teacher’s Perception of Competency When Working with Diverse Families

Competent	Not at All	Not Very	Neutral	Somewhat	Extremely	Total Responses	Mean
# of Responses	2	7	14	11	5	39	3.26

Table 7: Priority

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total Responses	Mean
Priority	1	2	8	19	9	39	3.85

Additionally, teachers were given a chance to offer their own suggestions for ways that the school system could address this concern. These responses are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Recommendations for Improvement

1	“Enforce school attendance zones so that we are not educating kids from all over.”
2	“Make sure our two pain portals for parent academic information (Blackboard and Power School) are accessible in native languages.”
3	“I think providing more people in the community or offering meetings/programs in the community close to where families live as opposed to in the school building.”
4	“I think that teachers should be encouraged and compensated for home visits. It would change everything about the classroom experience for students and teachers.”
5	“Offer family literacy programs, adult ELL classes, have meetings in the community for small groups and home visits.”
6	“Establish a variety of ways parents could contact the school around their work

	schedules.”
7	“Translation services for every major document. Email translation assistance.”
8	“Have volunteers available that speak other languages to come in and help in the classroom when the ELL co-teacher is unavailable.”
9	“Trainings, more supports, more parent liaisons, translation of report cards/IEPs.”
10	“Advertising in the community and providing transportation to and from major events (open house, parent-teacher conferences, etc.)

Discussion

Based on the responses to this survey, it appears that teachers feel that this is an issue in the schools that deserves more attention. Currently, teachers are finding the biggest barrier to collaboration with culturally diverse parents to be in the language barriers and time constraints. With all their other responsibilities, teachers do not feel like they have the time to put in more effort into fostering a relationship with these families. In fact, they report one of the barriers they face is the lack of effort that diverse parents put into the relationship, which teachers indicate may be due to differences in beliefs about education, how to show respect, and overall discomfort with the U.S education system.

Since the investigated system is very diverse, there are a variety of supports already in place; however, based on results of this survey it appears that teachers are either not aware of all the supports and how they can access them, or they are not finding the current supports to be beneficial at this time. For example, some teachers reported that they didn’t know what a parent liaison is and if their school even had one.

Additionally, teachers reported that they are aware of the Language Line service, but have never actually accessed it.

According to this research, a majority of teachers took a neutral position when asked how competent they feel when working with culturally and linguistically diverse parents. However, when asked if they felt that improving this communication should be more of a priority in the school system, a majority said they agreed. This indicates that there is still room for improvement in terms of establishing new techniques to facilitate this communication, educating teachers on offered supports and how to access them, as well as making parents more aware of these supports.

These findings offer important information for all school personnel and central office administration as the concept of home-school collaboration is something that is better facilitated when there is effective within-school collaboration as well. While teachers have a great deal of communication with parents, so does the support staff (i.e. social workers, school psychologists, school counselors) and administration staff. Additionally, this survey provides informative data for central office in terms of establishing new supports for the next school year as well as making sure that there is effective training for all school staff on what is currently available in the system and community. This study emphasizes the importance of conducting a survey to investigate teacher perceptions as a tool for enhancing services related to home-school collaboration. Responses on this survey help to identify system needs and determine more effective uses for resources. Overall, this survey is an intervention in itself for increasing awareness of resources for teachers.

In terms of implications for school psychologists, these findings reinforce the importance of the collaborative role that psychologists play. Specifically, psychologists are often times the ones that are informing teachers and other school personnel of available supports both in the school and community. If teachers are unaware of what resources are available to them, it is important for the school psychologists to have knowledge of this so they serve as a resource themselves in addition to providing teacher trainings at the beginning of the school year on offered supports. In terms of their own consultation with parents, school psychologists should be aware of how to involve the parent as much as possible in addition to making them feel comfortable. This, in turn, will provide teachers with a model of how effective communication with parents should look.

Limitations of the Study

The sample size is one limitation of this study. The response rate to the survey was approximately 13%, which is considered to be below the average rate of responses to a survey. There were also disproportions in the grade levels of the teachers who participated, with a majority of the responses coming from the middle and high school. Representation was lacking from the elementary school level. Additionally, the elementary school involved in this study is one of Alexandria's less diverse schools, which also could have impacted the lack of responses as the study was not as relevant to that population of teachers. Another limitation of this study is that it took place in a system that already has a plethora of supports in place to address diversity, so while teachers felt like there was still room for improvement, they also felt relatively competent in their abilities to foster this communication with diverse parents already.

Implications for Future Research

Future studies on the relationship between schools and culturally and linguistically diverse families would ideally be conducted with a larger number of participants that equally represents the different grade levels. Additionally, it would be beneficial to conduct this research across various school systems that differ in terms of socioeconomic status and diversity. If new strategies were implemented to address this concern, it would be helpful to conduct a follow-up study to ascertain whether or not the requested supports enhanced the collaboration between school staff and culturally diverse families.

Appendix A

Informed Consent

Identification of Investigators & Purpose of Study

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Sammy Silver from James Madison University. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between Alexandria City Public Schools and families of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Specifically, this study will evaluate how effective current practices are, how aware teachers are of offered supports, how often these supports are utilized, what current barriers exist to improving this relationship with culturally diverse families, and what could possibly be implemented in the future to further foster the relationship between the school and these families from the perspective of current school teachers. This study will contribute to the researcher's completion of her education specialist degree thesis.

Research Procedures

This study consists of an online survey that will be administered to individual participants through email using Qualtrics (an online survey tool). You will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to working with the families of your culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Time Required

Participation in this study will require approximately 10 minutes of your time.

Risks

The investigator does not perceive more than minimal risks from your involvement in this study (that is, no risks beyond the risks associated with everyday life).

Benefits

Potential benefits from participation in this study include: obtaining valuable information to report to Alexandria City Schools in terms of knowing what supports teachers are already using and are aware of, and what could possibly be done to improve upon this relationship between the schools and culturally diverse families in the future. The survey itself may also be beneficial to teachers in terms of informing of them of existing supports that they may not have originally been aware of.

Confidentiality

The results of this research will be presented at James Madison University's Graduate Psychology Symposium. While individual responses are anonymously obtained and recorded online through the Qualtrics software, data is kept in the strictest confidence. No identifiable information will be collected from the participant and no identifiable responses will be presented in the final form of this study. All data will be stored in a secure location only accessible to the researcher. The researcher retains the right to use

and publish non-identifiable data. At the end of the study, all records will be destroyed. Final aggregate results will be made available to participants upon request.

Participation & Withdrawal

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. However, once your responses have been submitted and anonymously recorded you will not be able to withdraw from the study.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:

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Questions about Your Rights as a Research Subject

Dr. David Cockley
Chair, Institutional Review Board
James Madison University
(540) 568-2834
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Giving of Consent

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about this study. I have read this consent and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age. By clicking on the link below, and completing and submitting this anonymous survey, I am consenting to participate in this research.

https://qtrial2015az1.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_bfkP4ZelYU6LwLr

Samantha Silver, M.A.
School Psychology Intern

This study has been approved by the IRB, protocol # 16-032.

Appendix B

Survey

1. Please identify your gender.
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
2. Please identify your race
 - a. Caucasian or White
 - b. Hispanic or Latino
 - c. Black or African American
 - d. Native American or American Indian
 - e. Asian/Pacific Islander
 - f. Other
3. What school(s) do you currently work in?
 - a. T.C. Williams High School
 - b. T.C. Williams High School Minnie Howard Campus
 - c. Francis C. Hammond Middle School
 - d. George Washington Middle School
 - e. Jefferson Houston School
 - f. John Adams Elementary School
 - g. Charles Barrett Elementary School
 - h. Patrick Henry Elementary School
 - i. Cora Kelly School for Math, Science and Technology
 - j. LylesOCrouch Traditional Academy
 - k. Douglas MacArthur Elementary School
 - l. George Mason Elementary School
 - m. Matthew Maury Elementary School
 - n. Mount Vernon Community School
 - o. James K. Polk Elementary School
 - p. William Ramsay Elementary School
 - q. Samuel W. Tucker Elementary School
 - r. Other
4. How many years have you worked as a teacher?
 - a. I am a first year teacher
 - b. 2-5 years
 - c. 6-10 years
 - d. 10-15 years
 - e. Over 15 years
5. Are you proficient in any languages besides English? If yes, please specify.
 - a. Yes _____
 - b. No
 - c.
6. In your experience, what are some barriers that you face when trying to collaborate with culturally diverse families? Select all that apply.
 - a. Language barriers

- b. Lack of cultural awareness needed to understand the perspective of culturally diverse families
 - c. Time constraints
 - d. Differences in beliefs about education
 - e. Differences in race
 - f. Differences in socio economic status
 - g. Lack of resources to help foster this communication
 - h. Other (Please specify) _____
7. Please indicate how often you use the following supports and/or strategies to better engage with culturally diverse families in Alexandria City Public Schools (Participants chose one of the following responses: Never, Less than Once a Month, 2-3 Times a Month, Once a Week, 2-3 Times a Week, Daily).
- a. Parent Liaisons
 - b. Interpreters and translators
 - c. Home visits
 - d. Sending notes home in the family's native language
 - e. Professional development opportunities to learn more about ELLs and their families
 - f. Provide groups/meetings specifically for culturally and linguistically diverse families
 - g. Call/meet with the parent before major meetings (i.e. eligibility, IEP, child study, etc.)
 - h. Family and Community Engagement Center
8. Please identify any other strategies that you use that are not listed above.
9. How have you utilized your school's parent liaison? Select all that apply.
- a. To help facilitate communication with a student's parent
 - b. To help coordinate translation services for parent/teacher conferences
 - c. To help learn about/refer parents to resources in the community
 - d. To help with parent support groups/parent education events
 - e. My school does not have a parent liaison.
 - f. I haven't had any contact with my school's parent liaison.
10. In terms of special education, how often are you seeing culturally/linguistically diverse parents attend important student-related meetings?
- a. Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Most of the Time
 - e. Always
11. In terms of general education, how often are you seeing culturally/linguistically diverse parents attend important student-related meetings?
- a. Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Most of the Time
 - e. Always

12. How satisfied do you feel with the supports and strategies Alexandria City Public Schools have in place to help involve culturally and linguistically diverse families?
 - a. Very Dissatisfied
 - b. Dissatisfied
 - c. Somewhat Dissatisfied
 - d. Neutral
 - e. Somewhat Satisfied
 - f. Satisfied
 - g. Very Satisfied
13. How competent do you feel when it comes to working with culturally and linguistically diverse parents? (1=Not at all competent, 5=Extremely Competent. Participants response on a 5-point Likert Scale).
14. Have you personally ever conducted a home visit for one of your students?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
15. How comfortable would you feel with conducting home visits on a more regular basis?
 - a. Very Uncomfortable
 - b. Somewhat Uncomfortable
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Somewhat Comfortable
 - e. Very Comfortable
16. How likely are you to attend teaching training programs, or an any other professional development opportunity, offered through ACPS that address this concern?
 - a. Very Unlikely
 - b. Unlikely
 - c. Somewhat Unlikely
 - d. Neutral
 - e. Somewhat Likely
 - f. Likely
 - g. Very Likely
17. I feel like improving this communication should be more of a priority.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree
18. Please describe some ways that you think your school could improve its relationship with culturally diverse families.

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